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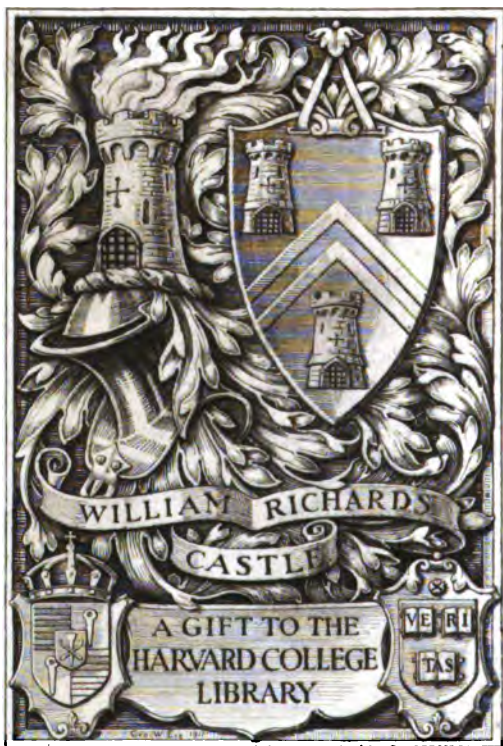
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# **ROBERT BUCHANAN**

**THE POET OF MODERN REVOLT**

**An Introduction to His Poetry**

**BY**

**ARCHIBALD STODART-WALKER**



**LONDON: GRANT RICHARDS**

**HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN**

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**TO**  
**M. T. K.**  
**IN MEMORY OF READINGS FROM**  
**THE POET AND OTHER ASSOCIA-**  
**TIONS OF FRIENDSHIP**



## PREFACE

**This book neither presumes to be of the nature of a criticism, nor of an estimation. It was conceived with the view of indicating the significance of Robert Buchanan as a poet, in the sense of the poet defined as an impassioned philosopher. There will be found nothing of the nature of comparative analysis.**

**The method pursued by the writer will soon be evident to the most casual reader. After a general introduction, in which a general glimpse is taken of the poet's point of view, the various poems are brought into consideration and displayed in a panoramic fashion. In following this plan, the author obtrudes his subjectivity as little as possible, but allows the poet to speak for himself and suggest his own significance and teaching. Occasionally, as in the chapter on the Devil, it has been found expedient to review in a cursory way the historical and literary parallels concerned, and in the**

introductory and concluding chapters an attempt is made to view, in general fashion, the significance of Mr. Buchanan in the stress of contemporary mental and spiritual searchings, and in face of the tendencies of modern economics.

The author has no concern in this place with Mr. Buchanan as a man, as a publicist, as a novelist and story-teller, or as a dramatist. He believes that in viewing him as a poet, he is concerned with the Buchanan that is of importance in contemporary literary aspirations; but even in so doing, he is not bold enough, in attempting this study of his significance, to go out of his way to allot to his work any definite valuation. In his humble opinion, that cannot be done, even by the most self-confident and self-righteous of critics. Time will not vary its claim in this case to have the chief say in the matter.

It may be of interest to the reader to know that this book is written by one who has sought far different solutions for most of the problems of life, from those that have appealed to the poet. But even a scientific man can view with sympathy one who seriously aspires to reach Truth, in a fashion and in a medium foreign to his own particular methods and teaching. Though the

mystic realism of the poet be anathema to the point of view of the scientific purist, yet the latter may allow himself to be carried from the solid ground of Nature, to which the mind which builds for aye must for ever trust, to the more shadowy land where the dreamer loves to dwell, and see mirrored in the eyes of the poet the vista of newer worlds and newer hopes, without in any way blurring the face of his philosophy.

In conclusion, the author desires to express indebtedness to his friend Mr. James Cadenhead for looking over the final proofs.

30 Walker Street,  
Edinburgh.



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## CHAPTER I

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Half a decade ago, a contemporary author of distinction,<sup>1</sup> writing without prejudice either to the exaggeration of comedy or the painfulness of accuracy, asked the question—‘Are there many Buchanans whom we have all been ignorantly confounding?’ and proceeded forthwith to picture various Robert Buchanans with more or less antagonistic methods and sympathies. ‘There is a poet Buchanan, Byronic and brilliant, who is only nominally the same as Buchanan the mystic (not to be confounded with Buchanan the materialist). There is also Buchanan the complete letter-writer, who is unrelated to Buchanan the author of “Christian Romances,” who, in his turn, suffers from being identified with the Buchanan who writes novels for the other person, and it need hardly be said that none of these gentlemen is Buchanan the essayist, or Buchanan the business man. . . . They were all born in different years, and some of them are dead. Several are men of genius, and one or two are Philistines whom the others dislike.’

<sup>1</sup> Zangwill.

The licence of a professional humorist is not to be called in question by a critic who poaches, and we are only grateful that we are able to discover an essential truth underlying this 'jeu d'esprit.' It is a truth which, perhaps in a partial sense, accounts for the fact that the brilliance of Mr. Buchanan's genius as a poet has not received that recognition from contemporary estimation which it deserves, even if (by the poet himself) not desired or expected. It is a truth that can hardly be disputed that the comparative brilliance of a man's more ephemeral work may detract from the proper estimation of what is more ambitious in conception, and deals more with questions that lie beyond mere ephemera and contemporary phases. A rapidly acting, rapidly thinking, rapidly varying generation, desirous chiefly of food which appeases a momentary appetite, is never particularly anxious to trouble itself with efforts of a serious or purposeful nature; especially when that work runs directly in the teeth of accepted beliefs and traditional custom. There can also be no doubt had Mr. Buchanan been merely a poet and less of a man, had his actions and utterances in other directions been less purposeful and skilful, that probably his poetry would have had more vogue. But the man Buchanan has always counted as a force in the storm and stress of contemporary opinion, and the fact that he is like Alan Breck, 'a bonny fighter,' that he is generally to be found on the side opposite to those

who sit in the seat of custom, and that he does not swim by choice in the direction of popular and evidently successful tendencies, goes far to account for a certain hostility. Mr. Buchanan has ever been keen to discern a possible falsehood in the assumed infallibility of contemporary truth; and the average mortal, finding happiness and comfort in the fond embrace of his own easy-souled conceptions of life and death, looks askance and with little respect on one who tilts at intellectual, moral, and social conventions that custom and the pursuit of his own point of view have made dear. We may respect those who tell us unwholesome truths, but we seldom love them; and most of us, however warlike physically, are either too lazy, too tired, too stupid, or too indifferent to take any serious heed of one who desires to carry the war of the mind and of the soul into the camps we have so comfortably furnished for our own peaceful, moral, and intellectual indolence and self-satisfaction. And however much we may dislike Mr. Buchanan's persistency and method of attack, none can doubt the honesty of his purpose. 'Trimming,' in his eyes, is one of the cardinal vices, and no susceptibilities—moral, theological, or literary—which we may possess ever deter him from speaking the truth as it occurs to him. For compromise he has as much liking as Mr. Morley, and granted that he is satisfied with his grasp of a particular truth, however far from the mark his limitations may keep him from the ultimate truth, he feels with Whately

that 'it makes all the difference in the world whether we put truth in the first place or in the second.' There are few of our national idols that he has not assailed, either with the full strength of his biggest guns, or with gentle tappings on possible feet of clay, and his attacks have not been when time has modified the absorbing attention of the particular idolatry or economy concerned, but when the soul of the people is piping hot, at moments when universal acclamation almost drowns the protesting voice which becomes, comparatively speaking, less efficacious than the traditional voice crying in the wilderness. The church of the people, the political idols of the hour; the cherished religious and political notions of the moment, rolled like sweet morsels under the tongue of contemporary opinion; the general triumphantly crowned by title, decoration, and epistolary ode; the scientists, accepting and working on the principle of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest; yes, even the very gods themselves, are all asked to stand and deliver, and declare whether they are not, after all, flying under false colours or running contrary to eternal moral truths. The nation itself, carried away, it may be, by the sensuousness of war, by the intoxication brought on by too long draughts at the fount of Patriotism, by the conception of universal Anglification, given to run riot in idolatries, 'congregating in absurdities, drifting into vanities, planning short-sightedly, plotting dementedly, waxing out of proportion, overblown, affected, pretentious,

bombastical, hypercritical, pedantic, fantastically delicate' (to quote Mr. George Meredith), may rouse the literary protest, yes, often the literary anger, of one who at any rate has never been troubled with any sham hate or sham affection. Thus a combination of personal circumstances, which though perhaps indicating a certain want of perspective, yet reflect an undoubted spirit of bravery upon the man who fears neither man, god, nor devil in the assertion of his point of view, has distracted, in no small way, the attention of contemporary study from the poet's more ambitious work. It is not for us to attach the blame only to Mr. Buchanan's detractors. In his heart hating no man, the poet has throughout his career been at daggers-drawn with men of all classes, creeds, and professions, for the simple reason that, concomitant with the growth and maturity of his general point of view, he has retained an almost childish sensitiveness to criticism, and a fanatical hatred of what he has deemed critical injustice. The result of this want of adaptability to things as they are has been that his life has been one of continued strife; but in recalling this fact, let us not forget that the men he has challenged to literary combat and assailed with his heaviest battalions, have not been those who were striving with feeble wings to flutter their way up the lower rungs of the ladder of fame, but those who had reached, or imagined that they had reached, to the very pinnacle of Parnassus. As he has said, 'I've popt at vultures circling skyward, I've made the

carriage-hawks a byword, but never caused a sigh or sob in the breast of mavis or cockrobin, nay, many such have fed out of my hand and blest me.' He is voluntarily, as he calls himself, 'The Ishmael of Song,' and his wandering in the wilderness no doubt brought him more satisfaction than an attempt to attain contemporary success by a careful study of the principles of compromise, expediency, and adaptability. 'You must not gather,' he wrote, 'from this that I am in revolt against my fellow-workers; on the contrary, I love the inky fellows immensely, when they are not spoiled by prosperity. And frankly, I myself have not escaped the charge of selling my birthright for a mess of pottage; of gaining my bread by hodman's labour, when I might have been sitting empty-stomached on Parnassus. Yes, I of all men; I who after ten years of solitude should have gone mad if I had not rushed back into the thick of life, yet who, even there, have been haunted by the ghosts of the solitude left behind, and have never bowed my head to any idol or cared for any recompense but the love of men. My errors, however, have arisen from excess of human sympathy, from ardour of human activity, rather than from any great love for the loaves and fishes. Lacking the pride of intellect, I have by superabundant activity tried to prove myself a man among men, not a mere "littérateur." Moreover, I have never yet discovered in myself, or in any man, any gift which entitles me to despise the meanest of my fellows. So I have stooped to

hodman's work occasionally, mainly because I cannot pose in the godlike manner of your lotus-eaters. I have not humoured my reputation. I have thought no work undignified which did not convert me into a Specialist or a Prig. I have written for all men and in all moods. But the birthright which belongs to all Poets has never been offered by me in any market, and my manhood has never been stained by any sham hate or sham affection. With a heart overflowing with love, I have gathered to myself only hate and misconception,—and all this for one reason only, that I have endeavoured to avoid self-worship, and to find some slight foothold of human truth.'

But that is beside our purpose here. The object we have set ourselves to accomplish is, to view in a panoramic fashion the more noteworthy of Mr. Buchanan's poetical works, and in doing so, to make no attempt to criticise, estimate, dogmatise, or controvert, but as far as possible to allow the poet to plead for himself, and indicate his own poetic and philosophic significance. The task is comparatively simple, for throughout his work the personality of the poet, or rather the mental and spiritual evidence of it, asserts itself in no shadowy fashion, and also because Mr. Buchanan has from time to time supplied us with prose notes as to his own tentatives and his own definite outlook on life, and as to the relation of his teaching to the whole momentous question of the struggle for existence.



For the more important of Mr. Buchanan's poetical utterances deal with the works of God the All-Father, as they are revealed to the consciousness and elaborated in the imagination of the poet. The conception of Nature and the principles which underlie its workings, as being the basis on which we view the God-Father, was early grasped by the poet, and it is not difficult to come to the conclusion that his relation to Nature is more or less the relationship of nearly all religious systems, being founded on a desire to protect the weak against the strong. It is, in fact, a protest against the principle of the All-Father—the egoistic principle of the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. His sympathy with those who fall in the struggle is supplemented by a bitterness against Nature, for what he deems to be useless cruelty and suffering, which the poet fails to recognise as being at the basis of that very evolutionary amelioration which he would be the first to herald. The struggle of life and decay which is the daily and hourly process of existence, which, as has been said by Lucretius, 'imparts to the infinite and all-pervading movement of Nature the interest and the life of human passion on the grandest and widest sphere of action, and makes each particular object in Nature fragrant with a deeper meaning,' inspires no sympathy in the poet. But despite his revolt against the tyranny of Nature the poet is essentially an optimist; he believes, he affirms, he abjures negation. 'I have sought only one

thing in life—the solution of its Divine meaning ; and sometimes I think I have found it. But in an age when the gigman assures us there are no gods, when to believe in anything but hand-to-mouth science and dish-and-all-swallowing politics is a sign of intellectual decrepitude, when a man cannot start better than by believing that all humanity's previous starts have been blunders, I would rather go back to Balzac and swear by Godhead and the Monarchy, than drift about with nothing to swear by at all. And absolutely I don't know whether there are gods or not. I know only that there is Love and lofty Hope and Divine Compassion, and that if these are delusions, you and I and all of us are no better than infusoria. If "this" is the only life I am to live, the devil help me!—for if the gods cannot, the devil must'; and again, 'I, for my part, who was nourished on the husks of socialism and the chill water of infidelity, who was born in Robert Owen's "New Moral World," and who scarcely heard even the name of God till at ten years of age I went to godly Scotland, have been God-intoxicated ever since I saw the mountains and the sea. Without the sanction of the supernatural, the certainty of the superhuman, life to me is nothing.'

I do believe in God : that He  
Made Heaven and Earth, and you and me !  
Nay, I believe in all the host,  
Of Gods, from Jesus down to Joss,  
But honour best and reverence most  
That guileless God who bore the Cross.

But early enough he sees that the Calvinistic idea

of God the Father as stern and inexorable is the true one. Nature works on unmoved, unchecked by any cry born of humanity.

Oh, Thou art pitiless ! They call Thee Light,  
 Law, Justice, Love ; but Thou art pitiless.  
 What thing of earth is precious in Thy sight,  
 But weary waiting on and soul's distress ?  
 When dost Thou come with glorious hands to bless  
 The good man that dies cold for lack of Thee ?  
 When bringst Thou garlands for our happiness ?  
 Whom dost Thou send but Death to set us free ?  
 Blood runs like wine—foul spirits sit and rule—  
 The weak are crushed in every street and lane—  
 He who is generous becomes the fool  
 Of all the world, and gives his life in vain.  
 Wert Thou as good as Thou art beautiful,  
 Thou couldst not bear to look upon such pain.

It is not a new cry, but it is a cry that will eternally spring from the hearts of such as desire a meaning for the existence of the inexorable law of the survival of the fittest and the crushing of the weak. It is the helping meed, as we have said, of most religious systems, to step in and help the fallen, becoming in so doing what Mr. Buchanan has somewhere said, in a spirit of antagonism to Nature, and in consequence to God the Father. Human misery, human aims, human despair, and the long wailing cry of centuries to a silent creator, it is these that rouse the blood, the fire, the eloquence—yes, the disdain of the poet, tuned, it may be, to a keynote of love and pity for 'Him' whom he addresses.

Helpless Thou seemest to redeem our plight—  
 Thy lamp shines on shut eyes—each Spirit springs  
 To its own stature still in Thy despite—  
 While haggard Nature round Thy footstool clings,  
 Pale, powerless, sitt'st Thou, in a Lonely Light.

The poet steps in where the scientist fears, or rather refuses, to tread. The point of view of the scientist at this stage is one of acceptance—that of the poet, of questioning. Science accepts the principle, the poet asks why? In other words, he judges the power that made him by the power that he possesses. The position of both is logical enough. The evolutionary spirit regards all intellectuality, all consciousness, all spiritualisation, as dependent on sensation and a certain elaboration of simple movements, and records in arbitrary terms accordingly without proceeding further; the poet, regarding these as the definite preordained dispensations of a creator, demands an explanation.

This note continues throughout the poet's work, ever questioning, ever believing, ever hoping on, though at times, even in the despair of his soul, crying, 'Adonai! Lord! art thou a Phantom too?'

Black is the night, but blacker my despair;  
The world is dark—I walk I know not where;  
Yet phantoms beckon still, and I pursue,  
Phantoms still phantoms! there they loom—and there,  
Adonai! Lord! art thou a Phantom too?

He ever seeks an explanation, and with Browning counts this life but a stuff to try the soul's strength on—educate the man!—'What,' he asks, 'were such faith worth if this low earth were all, if the tangled threads of our strange human experience were not to be gathered up again, after death's ascendancy, by the God that made man in His likeness—yea, immortal like Himself? Without that certain hope of a divine explanation, without

that last hope of heavenly meeting and eternal reconciliation, the life we live would be profitless—as a book left unfinished, as a song half unsung, as a tale just begun.’

His position to dogmatic Christianity will be revealed as we study the many poems in which Christ, and the Church that was founded in his name, are incidentally considered. For the Church the poet has no pity, little sympathy, and often much contempt; for the Christ he has ever human love and brotherly sympathy for ‘his dream of the world’s salvation.’

In a prose note appended to the ‘City of Dream,’ Mr. Buchanan supplies us with a key-note, not only to the particular poem concerned, but to the spirit of his whole work. ‘To compare small things with great; the “City of Dream” is an epic of modern revolt and reconciliation. My book attempts to be for the inquiring modern spirit what the lovely vision of Bunyan is for those who still exist in the fairyland of dogmatic Christianity; but dealing as it must with elements more complex and indeterminate, touching on problems which to the orthodox believer do not even exist, it is necessarily less matter of fact, and in all probability less sufficing. Be that as it may, the sympathetic modern will find here the record of his own heartburnings, doubts, and experience, though they may not have occurred to him in the same order, or culminated in the same way; though he may not have passed through the Valley of Dead Gods at all, or looked with

wondering eyes on the spectre of the Inconceivable; though he may never have realised to the full, as I have done, the existence of the City without God, or have come at last, footsore and despairing, to find solace and certainty on the brink of the Celestial Ocean. To the orthodox believer in Christianity there is but one righteous Book, the Old and New Testaments. To the present writer all books are righteous which, in one way or another, help the soul on its heavenward pilgrimage, sound the depths of spiritual speculation, and habituate the ear of conscience to the harmonies of some brighter and some more perfect life.'

From what we have indicated, it will be gathered at once that the poet's work is not to satisfy those who 'seek their trim, poetic academe.'

I do not sing aloud in measured tone  
Of those fair paths the easy-soul'd pursue.

That he leaves to those who reflect the tendencies of their age, to the poets who mirror the evident present alone, rather than discern the gigantic problems which are growing in the womb of the future. To those who, like the late Mr. Huxley, would confine writers of 'merely imaginative literature,' to singing of what they see, or have been taught to see, in the more sensuous side of Nature, Mr. Buchanan must appear the first of heretics. He has the damning quality of being something of a philosopher, not of the academic type, nor of the type that speaks in terms of common men with common experience.

He has insight, like all poets and seers. 'He is indeed a student as other students are (and a philosopher as other philosophers are), but he is emphatically the student and philosopher who sees, who feels, who sings; he is,' as he has described Mrs. Browning, 'unique in these days—specifically a poet—one troubled by the great mystery of life, and finding no speech adequate but song.' As we shall find later, nothing that affects the welfare and interest of humanity, nothing that touches on the drama of life, on the world's tragedies and comedies—not even the terrific commonplaces and sublime vulgarities of great cities—nothing that affects his spiritual and mental yearnings, aspirations, and depressions, is outside the spiritualising, idealising, and philosophising of the poet. The hopelessness of the struggle for existence, yet the grandeur of struggling at all; the tyranny of circumstance, with its underlying pathos; the fretting, the fever, the joy, the glamour, the revelations of life; the mystery, the meaning, the end of life; the dreams of the dreamers, the song of the singers, the hands of the helpers; the cries for life, the cries for death; the stillness of God, and the human eyes of Christ; the passions and the envy; the compassion and the sympathy brought on earth by faith in revealed religion; all are seen and sung and taught in the language of the poet or seer. 'It may safely be affirmed that no subject is unfit for poetic treatment which can be spiritualised to musical form of harmonious and natural numbers.' Not that Mr. Buchanan is

blind as to the dignity of the revelation. 'According to the dignity of the revelation will be the rank of the poet or seer in the temple. The epic poet is great because his matter is great in the first place, and because he has not fallen below the level of his matter. The dramatist is great by his truth to individual character not his own, and his power of presenting that truth while spiritualising into definite form and meaning some vague situation in the sphere of actual or ideal life. The lyric poet owes his might to the personal character of the emotion aroused by his vision. Then, there are ranks within ranks. Not an eye in the throng, however, but has some object of its own, and some peculiar sensitiveness to light, form, colour. To Milton, a prospect of heavenly vistas, where stately figures walk and cast no shade; but to Pope (a seer, though low down in the ranks), the pattern of teacups, and the peeping of clocked stockings under farthingales. While the rouge on the cheek of modern love betrays itself to the languid yet keen eyes of Alfred de Musset, Robert Browning is proclaiming the depths of tender beauty underlying modern love and its rouge; each is a seer, and each is true, only one sees a truth beyond the other truth. After Wordsworth has penetrated with solemn-sounding footfall into the aisle of the Temple, David Gray follows, and utters a faint cry of beautiful yearning as he dies upon the threshold.'

Mr. Buchanan, as we have said, has essayed many themes, but there can be no doubt that his



latter work, dealing boldly with questions which touch the very heart of religions and theologies, is that upon which the uniqueness and distinction of his position must depend. Over thirty years ago, when he sang only of Pan and his brother gods, of Scottish village life, and 'of the quiet wonders of the unsung city streets,' he was concerned with the fact of the scantiness of the artistic treatment of morality and religion in modern art. 'Religion,' says Goethe, 'stands in the same relation to art as any other of the higher interests of life. It is a subject, and its rights are those of all other subjects.' 'Yet,' adds Mr. Buchanan, 'how scantily are morality and religion represented in modern art! Why, for instance, is our Christianity forgotten as a "subject"? Where is the great poem, where the noble music built on that wondrous theme? Milton, with all his power, is academic, not modern, and with the exception of a few faint utterances of Wordsworth, all our other religious poetry is conventional and inartistic. We hear, indeed, the metallic periods of the didactic teacher, and the feeble wail of the religious enthusiast, but seldom, indeed, are our nobler intellectual and spiritual strivings phrased into perfect song. The reticence of false culture steals over the life of many who might instruct us deeply by their experience, who, if they do speak, are moved by the retrograde spirit of another civilisation, and use the formal periods of an alien tongue. Why, in the name of our new gods, are we still to be bound by the fetters of Prometheus? We are, if not quite

Celts, more Celts than Greeks, and, thank Heaven, not altogether an intellectual nation. . . . We are a modern people, slightly barbaric in matters of art; but our natures have a glow of emotion quite unknown to the frigid spirit of Athenian inquiry. There is a great emotional and spiritual life yet unrepresented, there are rude forces not yet brought into play, but all of which must sooner or later have their place in art; and the indigenous product of our experience, however inferior to other civilisations, is yet vastly superior to all exotics grafted on the weakened trunk of what was once a noble tree.'

From this we cannot but draw the inference that in these early days the poet had in view not only 'The Book of Orm' and 'The City of Dream,' but also the conception of 'The Wandering Jew' and 'The Ballad of Mary the Mother.'

Dealing with Mr. Buchanan's general method throughout his work, if one can speak of a general method, one might seize hold of his own words and dwell on the 'Mystic Realism' that pervades the whole. In a prose note attached to the 'Drama of Kings,' the poet says: 'In the present work, and in the works which have preceded it from the same pen ("Undertones," "Inverburn," "London Poems," and "The Book of Orm"), an attempt is made to combine two qualities which the modern mind is accustomed to regard apart—reality and mystery, earthliness and spirituality. The writer dropped into a world a few years ago like a being fallen from another planet. His first impression

was one of surprise and awe: he stood and wondered, and here on the same spot he stands and wonders still. What is nearest to him seems so sublime, unaccountable, and inexhaustible, and occasionally, indeed, so droll and odd, that he has never ceased to regard it with all the eyes of his soul from that day to this. Others may go to the mountain-tops and interrogate the spheres. Wiser men may peruse the Past and see there, afar away, the dreamy poetry for which the spirit eternally yearns. More acquiescent men may look heavenward, slowly and strangely losing the habit of earthly perception altogether. With all these, with all who love beauty near or afar away, in any shape or form, abide the twofold blessing of reverence and love. But the Mystic is occupied hopelessly with what immediately surrounds him. Minuter examination only leads to extreme joy and wonder. To him this ever-present reality is the only mystery, and in its mystery lies its sublime fascination and beauty. Only what is most real and visible and certain is marvellous, and only that which is marvellous has the least fascination. What he sees may be seen by every soul under the sun, for it is the soul's own reflection in the river of life glassed to a mirror by its own speed. . . . He looks on into the eyes nearest to him, and ah! what distance does he not find there? Approaching each creature as ever from the mystic side, he becomes, in spite of himself, an optimist. The moment he seizes for examination is the divine moment when the creature

under examination—be it Buonaparte, Bismarck, or “Barbara Gray”—is at its highest and best, whether that “best” be intellectual beatification or the simple vicarious instinct which merges in the identity of another. He sees the nature spiritualised, in the dim, strange light of whatever soul the creature possesses. This light is often very dim indeed, very doubtful—so doubtful that its very existence is denied by non-mystic men whose musings assume the purely spiritual and unimaginative form. But be the teaching true or false, be the light born in the subject examined, or in the human sentiment that broods over it, this mystic approach to the creature at his highest point of spiritualisation, this mode of approach which seems unnatural to many because it involves the most minute enumeration of details and the most careful display of the very facts which artists try most to conceal, is the only procedure possible to the present writer. . . . Imagination is not, as some seem to imply, the power of conjuring up the remote and unknowable, but the gift of realising correctly in correct images the truth of things as they are and ever have been. He who can see no poetry in his own time is a very unimaginative person. The truly imaginative being is he who carries his own artistic distance with him, and sees the mighty myths of life, vivid yet afar off, glorified by the truth which is Eternal. How many people can walk out on a starry night, or sit by the side of the sea, unmoved? But let

a comet appear, or a star shoot, and they exclaim, "How beautiful!" Let a whale rise up in the water and roar, and they think "How wonderful are the works of God!" These are the people, and their name is legion, who lack as yet the consecrating gleam of the imagination. As for the mystic, he needs neither a comet nor a whale to fill his soul with a sense of the wonderful; he needs still less the dark vistas of tradition or the archaic scenery of obscure periods. Go where he may, his path swarms with poetic forms. Faces! how they haunt him with their weird and divine significance! What is nearest seems of all the most sublime and unaccountable. . . . In "The Drama of Kings" etc., one view is adopted; not the point of view of the satirist, nor of the historian, but that of the realistic mystic, who, seeking to penetrate deepest of all into the soul, and to represent the soul's best and finest mood, seizes that moment when the spiritual or emotional nature is most quickened by sorrow or by self-sacrifice, by victory or by defeat.'

And it will be seen as we proceed further that this mystic realism is never lost sight of. To the very last note of 'The New Rome' it is the pervading spirit; and the imaginative spirit is strongest and best when it touches those 'nearest realities' of which the poet speaks.

Even in the unsung city's streets  
Seem'd quiet wonders meet for serious song,  
Truth hard to phrase and render musical.  
For ah! the weariness and weight of tears,  
The crying out to God, the wish for slumber,  
They lay so deep, so deep! God heard them all

He set them unto music of His own ;  
But easier far the task to sing of kings,  
Or weave weird ballads where the moon-dew glistens,  
Than body forth this life in beauteous sound.

This mystic realism of the poet reaches its supreme moment perhaps in the poem 'The Man Accurst,' the Envoi to 'The Book of Orm,' and it is here that by the poet's own confession the personal keynote is most definitely struck. The same spirit is at work in 'The Wandering Jew,' that epos of the world's despair, in a manner haunting to the extreme.

For lo ! I voice to you a mystic thing  
Whose darkness is as full of starry gleams  
As is a tropic light ; in your dreams  
This thing shall haunt you and become a sound  
Of friendship in still places, and around  
Your lives this thing shall deepen and impart  
A music to the trouble of the heart,  
So that perchance, upon some gracious day,  
You may bethink you of the song, and pray  
That God may bless the singer for your sake !

And in the core of the whole work of the poet lies a great human sympathy, not a vague, altruistic universality of feeling, academic and cold, but the sympathy of a man with gnawing fears, aspiring hopes, and common temptations for men with like experiences. The gift of tears never fails him: tears, and a note of hope and eternal reconciliation for the meanest. The sense of the tragedy of common life is ever a pressing load, and the faces in the street—the faces of the lost, faces sacred on the altar of infamy and lust—burn into his soul.

These are the Lost, waifs which from wave to wave  
 Drift lone, while yonder on the yellow strand  
 The laughing children run from cave to cave  
 And happy lovers wander hand in hand.

The sun shines yonder on the green hillside,  
 The bright spire points to Heaven through leafy trees,  
 The Maiden wears the glory of a Bride,  
 The bright babe crows on the young Mother's knees.

O happy Bride ! O happy Mother ! born  
 To inherit all the light that life can give,  
 Here ye these voices out of depths forlorn ?  
 Know ye these Lost, *who die that ye may live ?*

Is not the last line the discovery, or at least the first truly poetical expression, of a great social truth? Down the deep waters of Death and Despair the poet wanders, finding the foul upastrees of butcheries and lust casting their shadow, dark and dread, on the Cross of Calvary; until, in the summit of his despair, in a moment of great soul and heart burning, after giving vent to Philippics, gorgeous in the splendour of their rhetoric, against a Church which for ever had kept the Christ from its doors, he sentences Christ through the voice of the spirit of mankind to walk for ever through the world with all the woes of earth upon his head, searching vainly for a Father God.

What is asked is the general tenor of the poet's song?

I do not sing for maidens. They are roses  
 Blowing along the pathway I pursue :  
 No sweeter things the wondrous world discloses,  
 And they are tender as the morning dew.  
 Blessed be maids and children : day and night  
 Their holy scent is with me as I write.

I do not sing aloud in measured tone  
Of those fair paths the easy-soul'd pursue ;  
Nor do I sing for Lazarus alone,  
I sing for Dives and the Devil too.  
Ah, would the feeble songs I sing might swell  
As high as Heaven and as deep as Hell !

I sing of the stain'd outcast at Love's feet—  
Love with his wild eyes on the evening light ;  
I sing of sad lives trampled down like wheat  
Under the heel of Lust, in Love's despite ;  
I glean behind those wretched shapes ye see  
In the cold harvest-fields of Infamy.

I sing of deathbeds (let no man rejoice  
Till that last piteous touch of all is given !);  
I sing of Death and Life with equal voice,  
Heaven watching Hell and Hell illumed by Heaven.  
I have gone deep, far down the infernal stair—  
And seen the heirs of Heaven arising there !

And yet behind all this sense of the blackness, despair, and apparent injustice of living, the poet is at heart an optimist. 'To every Soul beneath the sun wide open lies a Heaven of Love.' Vicarious love and suffering are the refining powers, the very salvation of man, and at the end of all things 'Man shall arise Lord of all things that be, Last of the Gods, and Heir of all things free.' While the bloodhounds of war are loose, his cry is a despairing one, his song the song of the slain, and his place by the mighty bivouac of the dead; while the scientist pursues his search for truth in the hope of adding one more drop to the great flood of human emancipation, he sings only the song of the beasts which are to him the martyrs in this evidence of the struggle for existence; but in the long-run he knows, that over all a beckoning hand gleams from the



lattices of heaven—however vague and untranslatable the beckon may be.

Pest on these dreary, dolent airs !  
 Confound these funeral pomps and poses !  
 Is Life's, Dyspepsia's, and Despair's,  
 And Love's complexion all chlorosis ?  
 A lie ! here 's Health and Mirth and Song,  
 The World still laughs and goes a-Maying.  
 The dismal, doleful, droning Throng  
 Are only smuts in sunshine playing !

Writing to Charles Warren Stoddard, he said :  
 ' Let us share this secret between us—that though the Gods may be dead, as men say, their wraiths still haunt the earth. Even here in this Babylon, this London, they walk nightly and fulfil their ghostly ministrations. Pan flits through the darkness of Whitechapel ; under the cupola of St. Paul's, I have seen Apollo face to face, Aphrodite has pillowed my head upon her naked breast ; and as for the weary, world-worn God of Galilee, he is everywhere, still pleading for us, still wondering that his Father shuts himself away. Was not our Elder Brother out yonder on the Pacific with Father Damien, and is he not here incarnate whenever the bread of charity is broken ? The last word of the Soul is not yet said. When it is uttered in the midst of this Belshazzar's Feast of modern Culture, both Gods and Poets will live again.'

In more or less of a systematic way, we now propose to deal with the various poetical works of Mr. Buchanan, seeing him more clearly in the lights we have indicated, and viewing him in other

garbs as satirist, humorist, and lyrist. For the bard can kick his heels with the merriest of us, whether inspired by Shon Maclean, Vanderdecken, or instigated by the Devil incarnate himself. The latter gentleman, with Mr. Buchanan as his sartorial architect, may not be recognised by those who have studied him in the pictures of Milton, Goethe, or Molière, but he certainly is a living creature, gifted with human eyes and human sympathies. Has not Mr. Buchanan been told that Hell is now the only place where anybody believes in Heaven?

## CHAPTER II

### POEMS OF PROBATION

Three volumes, published between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-five, are what Mr. Buchanan has himself described as his 'Poems of Probation,' wherein 'I have fairly hinted what I am trying to assimilate in life and thought.' 'Undertones,' dedicated to John Westland Marston, was published in 1863; 'Idylls and Legends of Inverburn,' in 1865; and 'London Poems,' with a note dedicatory to W. Hepworth Dixon, in 1866. The biographical details which surround the publication of these volumes with more than a pathetic halo have been supplied to us on more than one occasion by the poet. Two years after the publication of 'London Poems,' a small volume entitled 'David Gray, and other Essays,' left Mr. Buchanan's hands. To lovers of the poet's work there is much that is touched with sacredness in this volume; and in the biographical notice of David Gray, 'the young poet of the Luggie,' one learns of the dismal material outlook that met the two friends as they walked 'in the spring, at the golden gates of morning.' And directly enough for all

purposes of fidelity, two of these volumes of poems are laid with almost breaking heart on the cairn of the dead friend. The prologue 'To David in Heaven' of the 'Undertones,' and 'Poet Andrew' in 'The Idylls and Legends'—in which, in the metaphor and language of the imaginative writer, the poet takes a backward glance over the life and work of the dead friend—are both tributes to David Gray. To the former must be ascribed more than an ordinate place in the roll of Mr. Buchanan's personal notes. There is so much of the poet's own tentatives and aspirations, and so sure a sign of that splendid fidelity to friendship which has always been a characteristic of Mr. Buchanan's life, that we need not trouble ourselves with apologies for rather voluminous quotations. Of poems written 'In Memoriam,' though not elaborately analytical like the work of the late Laureate, nor possessing the academic stateliness of 'Lycidas,' in its personal warmth, its unrestrained yet simple confessions of love, its unfettered avowal of the doubts and fears and hopes which meet the searcher after truth at the very threshold of the outlook, it is unequalled. An occasional halt, an occasional line written in despite of 'mere' literature, does not detract from the sincerity, literary and personal, of the young poet's first published lines :

Lo ! the slow moon foaming  
Thro' fleecy mists of gloaming,  
Furrowing with pearly edge the jewel-powder'd sky !  
Lo, the bridge moss-laden,  
Arch'd like foot of maiden,  
And on the bridge, in silence, looking upward, you and I !

Lo, the pleasant season  
 Of reaping and of mowing—  
 The foam-fringed moon above—beneath, the river darkly flowing !

Do I dream, I wonder ?  
 As, sitting sadly under  
 A lonely roof in London, thro' the grim square pane I gaze ?  
 Here of you I ponder,  
 In a dream, and yonder  
 The still streets seem to stir and breathe beneath the white moon's  
 rays.

By the vision cherish'd,  
 By the dark hope brav'd,  
 Do I but dream a hopeless dream, in the city that slew you, David ?

Poet gentle-hearted,  
 Are you then departed,  
 And have you ceased to dream the dream we loved of old so well ?  
 Has the deeply cherish'd  
 Aspiration perish'd,  
 And are you happy, David, in that heaven where you dwell ?  
 Have you found the secret  
 We, so wildly, sought for,  
 Is your young soul enswath'd, at last, in the singing robes you  
 fought for ?

The meaning, the Divine meaning of life and  
 living action, was in these younger, as in these  
 latter, days all that he sought :

Whether it be bootless,  
 Profitless and fruitless—  
 The weary aching upward strife to heights we cannot reach ;

and again he cries :

Has the strife no ending ?  
 Has the song no meaning ?

And touching reverently the volume of the dead  
 poet-friend, he continues :

The aching and the yearning,  
 The hollow, undiscerning,  
 Uplooking want I still retain, darken the leaves I touch—

Pale promise, with sad sweetness  
 Solemnising incompleteness,  
 But ah, you knew so little then—and now you know so much !  
 By the vision cherish'd,  
 By the dark hope brav'd,  
 Have you, in heaven, shamed the song, by a loftier music, David ?

Tho' the world could turn from you,  
 This, at least, I learn from you :  
 Beauty and Truth, tho' never found, are worthy to be sought,  
 The singer, upward-springing,  
 Is grander than his singing,  
 And tranquil self-sufficing joy illumines the dark of thought.  
 This, at least, you teach me,  
 In a revelation :  
 That gods still snatch, as worthy death, the soul in its aspiration.

Noble thought produces  
 Noble ends and uses,  
 Noble hopes are part of Hope wherever she may be,  
 Noble thought enhances  
 Life and all its chances,  
 And noble self is noble song—all this I learn from thee !  
 And I learn, moreover,  
 'Mid the city's strife too,  
 That such faint song as sweetens Death can sweeten the singer's  
 life too !

But ah, that pale moon foaming  
 Thro' fleecy mists of gloaming,  
 Furrowing with pearly edge the jewel-powder'd sky,  
 And ah, the days departed  
 With your friendship gentle-hearted,  
 And ah, the dream we dreamt that night, together, you and I !  
 Is it fashion'd wisely,  
 To help us or to blend us,  
 That at each height we gain we turn, and behold a heaven behind  
 us ?

We have quoted at some length, for it seems to us that here, 'in the spring, at the golden gates of morning,' we catch a clear note of the upward striving and the yearning for a solution which is never absent from Mr. Buchanan's more ambitious

work. It is a sincere note throughout, and never sincerer than when it touches on the personal relationship of the poets. It is not a subject for the cold pen of one whose claim is only that of sympathy; but it cannot be released from our passing observation, that never was poet more faithful to heart ties. His friend, his wife, his father, his mother, to these sacred ties he ever remained faithful, and the heart and the voice never tire of pouring forth some personal tribute, either to the

Father on earth for whom I've wept bereaven,<sup>1</sup>  
 Father more dear than any father in heaven ;

to his mother :

One deathless flame, one holy name,  
 One light that shines where'er I move,  
 Are thine, out of whose life I came,  
 Through whom I live and love ;

or his wife :

So, sweetheart, I have given unto thee  
 Not only such poor song as here I twine,  
 But Hope, Ambition, all of mine or me,  
 My flesh and blood and more, my soul divine,  
 Take all, take all.

The three volumes which have their right place in our consideration at present, although not revealing in any marked degree the light of mysticism and of mystic realism that make 'The Book of Orm,' 'The City of Dream,' and 'The Wandering Jew' so distinctive in modern imaginative literature, are of value not only as

<sup>1</sup> A word which, despite much criticism, the poet refused to surrender.

recording the first-fruits of what the poet was assimilating from Nature without and God within, but as the first links of a chain of ideas unbroken in sequence. From the proem to David Gray in 'Undertones,' published in 1863, to the last line of 'The New Rome,' published in 1899, the same tendencies are at work, the same views are conceived, though evolved and elaborated under the growth of the poet's personality, and the variation of environment and circumstance. We have the same yearning, the same hopes, virtually the same beliefs :

I end as I began,  
I think as first I thought.

Though imbued by early training with the classic spirit, Mr. Buchanan does not often wander in the garden of Academus, nor has he much parley with the reader's soul through the medium of the poetic Academe. 'Care for statuesque woes and nude intellectualities moving on a background of antique landscape' has never troubled Mr. Buchanan much. But in his article entitled from 'Æschylus to Victor Hugo,' it is easy to comprehend the depth—rather width—of his classical skill, and in his first volume he essays the use of his Celtic imagination to flights in Arcady and in other groves where the Pagan gods dwell, with Pan, with Polypheme, Selene, and even with Ades, King of Hell. In 'Undertones,' if we have nothing else, we have atmosphere and drama. No one but a dramatist



could have written 'Polypheme's Passion,' nor even 'Pygmalion the Sculptor,' and seldom if ever have we come nearer to feeling the glow, the spirit, and the abandon of paganism than in the poem called 'Pan,' and in the poetical 'jeu d'esprit' 'The Satyr'; and if the volume, with all its fine workmanship and dramatic power, was justified by nothing else, we would dare to quote a short effort, 'Antony in Arms,' as combining dramatic action, characterisation, and truth to literary and historic tradition unequalled in poems of the kind. We give it in full.

#### ANTONY IN ARMS.

Lo, we are side by side !—One dark arm furis  
 Around me like a serpent warm and bare ;  
 The other, lifted 'mid a gleam of pearls,  
 Holds a full golden goblet in the air :  
 Her face is shining through her cloudy curls  
 With light that makes me drunken unaware,  
 And with my chin upon my breast I smile  
 Upon her, darkening inward all the while.

And thro' the chamber curtains, backward roll'd  
 By spicy winds that fan my fever'd head,  
 I see a sandy flat slope yellow as gold  
 To the brown banks of Nilus wrinkling red  
 In the slow sunset ; and mine eyes behold  
 The West, low down beyond the river's bed,  
 Grow sullen, ribb'd with many a brazen bar,  
 Under the white smile of the Cyprian star.

A bitter Roman vision floateth black  
 Before me, in my dizzy brain's despite ;  
 The Roman armour bristles on my back,  
 My swelling nostrils drink the fumes of fight :  
 But then, she smiles upon me !—and I lack  
 The warrior will that frowns on lewd delight,  
 And, passionately proud and desolate,  
 I smile an answer to the joy I hate.

Joy coming uninvoked, asleep, awake,  
 Makes sunshine on the grave of buried powers;  
 Ofttimes I wholly loathe her for the sake  
 Of manhood slipt away in easeful hours:  
 But from her lips mild words and kisses break,  
 Till I am like a ruin mock'd with flowers;  
 I think of Honour's face—then turn to hers—  
 Dark, like the splendid shame that she confers.

Lo, how her dark arm holds me!—I am bound  
 By the soft touch of fingers light as leaves:  
 I drag my face aside, but at the sound  
 Of her low voice I turn—and she perceives  
 The cloud of Rome upon my face, and round  
 My neck she twines her odorous arms and grieves,  
 Shedding upon a heart as soft as they  
 Tears 'tis a hero's task to kiss away!

And then she loosens from me, trembling still  
 Like a bright throbbing robe, and bids me 'go!—  
 When pearly tears her drooping eyelids fill,  
 And her swart beauty whitens into snow;  
 And lost to use of life and hope and will,  
 I gaze upon her with a warrior's woe,  
 And turn, and watch her sidelong in annoy—  
 Then snatch her to me, flush'd with shame and joy!

Once more, O Rome! I would be son of thine—  
 This constant prayer my chain'd soul ever saith—  
 I thirst for honourable end—I pine  
 Not thus to kiss away my mortal breath.  
 But comfort such as this may not be mine—  
 I cannot even die a Roman death:  
 I seek a Roman's grave, a Roman's rest—  
 But, dying, I would die upon her breast!

In 'Pan' the 'white-haired, low-lidded, gentle, aged god' sings forth, in his most gloriously egoistic way, his own perfection and his own powers. The poem is on the whole the most ambitious and the most successful in the volume. To use conventional terms, we might say that the spirit of the poem is maintained throughout, the imagination of the poet seldom flags, and

altogether there breathes a joy of living which contrasts strangely with our own Western gloom, born under newer gods and newer civilisations. From this pagan joy of life we can well appreciate the fact that in 'The Wandering Jew' the poet puts into the mouth of the accuser the charge that, at the birth of the new religion,

All other gentle gods that gladden'd man  
Faded—fled away ! the priests of Pan  
That, singing by Arcadian rivers, rear'd  
Their flowery altars, wept and disappear'd ;  
And men forgot the fields and the sweet light,  
Joy, and all wonders of the day and night,  
All splendours of the sense, all happy things,  
Art, and the happy Muse's ministrings,  
Forgot that radiant house of flesh divine  
Wherein each soul is shut as in a shrine ;

and also understand why in 'Pan at Hampton Court' in 'The Earthquake' there is this song (dramatic of course in its conception and utterance) :

Oh, who will worship the great god Pan  
Here in the streets with me ?  
Sad and tearful and weary and wan  
Is the god who died on the tree ;  
But Pan is under and Dian above,  
Though the dead god cannot see,  
And the merry music of youth and love  
Returns eternallic !

And though we digress, it is wise that we should recognise from the first that to the poet the human body is no 'lazar-house of flesh.' It is the temple in which our Godhood dwells. The essence of God is viewed through our own souls. Human passions, human desires, human aspirations are not the evidences of our birth as miserable sinners, but

are the sacred fires of Nature. Lust, treacheries, and butcheries are born of the conventional devil certainly, but to confuse human passions and desires, born of a Godhead, with unholy lust is, in the mind of the poet, to put a premium on the latter.

Although one can hardly speak of 'splendid imagery' in 'Undertones,' and although we miss the mystic weirdness of the maturer work of the poet, there is much in 'Pan' and other poems in this volume which essays picturesqueness and beauty of imagery in a language which is of the simplest.

When the cool aspen-fingers of the Rain  
Feel for the eyelids of the earth in spring,

When Thunder, waving wings,  
Groans, crouching from your lightning spears, and then  
Springs at your lofty silence with a shriek !

The following two extracts will give some idea of Mr. Buchanan's method :

I, Pan, with ancient and dejected head  
Nodding above its image in the pool,  
And large limbs stretch'd their length on shadowy banks,  
Did breathe such weird and awful ravishment,  
Such symmetry of sadness and sweet sound,  
Such murmurs of deep boughs and hollow cells,  
That neither bright Apollo's hair-strung lute,  
Nor Heré's queenly tongue when her red lips  
Flutter to intercession of love-thoughts  
Throned in the counsel-keeping eyes of Zeus,  
Nor airs from heaven, blow sweetlier. Hear me, gods  
Behind her veil of azure, Artemis  
Turn'd pale and listen'd ; mountains, woods, and streams  
And every mute and living thing therein,  
Marvell'd, and hush'd themselves to hear the end—  
Yea, far away, the fringe of the green sea  
Caught the faint sound, and with a deeper moan  
Rounded the pebbles on the shadowy shore.

Whence, in the season of the pensive eve,  
 The earth plumes down her weary, weary wings;  
 The Hours, each frozen in his mazy dance,  
 Look scared upon the stars and seem to stand  
 Stone-still, like chisell'd angels mocking Time;  
 And woods and streams and mountains, beasts and birds,  
 And serious hearts of purblind men, are hush'd;  
 While music sweeter far than any dream  
 Floats from the far-off silence, where I sit  
 Wondrously wov'n about with forest boughs—  
 Through which the moon peeps faintly, on whose leaves  
 The unseen stars sprinkle a diamond dew—  
 And shadow'd in some water that not flows,  
 But, panning, spreads dark waves as smooth as oil  
 To listen!

And

Wherefore, ye gods, with this my prophecy  
 I sadden those sweet sounds I pipe unseen.  
 From dimly lonely places float the sounds  
 To haunt the regions of the homeless air,  
 Whatever changeful season ye vouchsafe  
 To all broad worlds which, hearing, whisper, 'Pan!'  
 And thence they reach the hearts of lonely men,  
 Who wearily bear the burthen and are pain'd  
 To utterance of fond prophetic song,  
 Who singing smile, because the song is sweet,  
 Who die, because they cannot sing the end.

Of other poems, the metre of 'The Satyr' rattles  
 on like a highland burn after rain, and is rich with  
 Pagan colour and the joy of living. 'The dews and  
 rains mingle in his blood, the wind stirs his veins  
 with the leaves of the wood, he drinks strength  
 from the sun':

The changes of earth,  
 Water, air, ever stirring,  
 Disturb me, conferring  
 My sadness or mirth.

'Polypheme's Passion' is, considered dramatically,  
 a fine piece of art, the poetic protests of love  
 which the Cyclops conceives for Galatea, 'she

alone who is worthy of the conversation and serious consideration of such a god as he,' being punctuated by the alternating sceptical and admiring Silenus. Here is a description of Bacchus:

I know no thing more beautiful than he  
 When, dripping odours cool,  
 Deep-purpled, like a honey-bosom'd flower  
 For which the red mouth buzzes like a bee,  
 He bursts from thy deep caverns gushingly,  
 And throws his pleasure round him in a shower,  
 And sparkles, sparkles, like the eyes that see,  
 In sunshine, murmuring for very glee,  
 And bursting beaded bubbles until sour  
 Lips tremble into moist anticipation  
 Of his rich exultation !

And here is Galatea :

Her voice hath gentle sweetness, borrow'd  
 From soft tide-lispings on the pebbly sand,  
 'Tis like the brooding doves in junipers ;  
 White as a shell of ocean is her hand,  
 Wherein, with rosy light, the pink blood stirs !  
 Her hair excels the fruitage of the beech  
 Wherein the sun runs liquid gleam on gleam ;  
 Her breasts are like two foaming bowls of cream,  
 A red straw-berry in the midst of each !  
 And the soft gold-down on her silken chin  
 Is like the under side of a ripe peach—  
 A dimple dipping honeyly therein !

Speaking of Love's influence on his heart, Polypheme says :

' My heart is . . .  
 It is as mild as patient flocks in fold.  
 I am as lonely as the snowy peak  
 Of Dardanos, and, like an eagle, Love  
 Stoops o'er me, helpless, from its eyrie above,  
 And grasps that lamb, my Soul, within its beak.

The imagery is sustained throughout the volume,

and occasionally the poet rises to heights of great dignity, as, for instance, in the stately periods addressed by Penelope to her absent Ulysses, commencing :

Whither, Ulysses, whither dost thou roam,  
Roll'd round with wind-led waves that render dark  
The smoothly-spinning circle of the sea?

Lo ! Troy has fallen, fallen like a tower,  
And the mild sun of a less glorious day  
Gleams faintly on its ruins.

And all the air is hollow of my joy.

But thy deep strength is in the solemn dawn  
And thy proud step is in the plumed noon,  
And thy grave voice is in the whispering eve.

Behold, now I am mock'd !—Suspicion  
Mumbles my name between his toothless gums ;

And when the winds  
Swoop to the waves and lift them by the hair,  
And the long storm-roar gathers, on my knees  
I pray for thee. Lo ! even now, the deep  
Is garrulous of thy vessel tempest-tost.

My very heart has grown a timid mouse,  
Peeping out, fearful, when the house is still.  
Breathless I listen thro' the breathless dark,  
And hear the cock counting the leaden hours,  
And, in the pauses of his cry, the deep  
Swings on the flat sand with a hollow clang ;  
And, pale and burning-eyed, I fall asleep  
When, with wild hair, across the wrinkled wave  
Stares the sick Dawn that brings thee not to me.'

In 'Pygmalion the Sculptor' we have a dramatic poem full of much of the purple light, the glow, the never-ending gleam of a daring imagination. The imagery is not fantastic, and is obtained by the simplest means.

Day by day my soul  
 Grew conscious of itself and of its fief  
 Within the shadow of her grave : therewith,  
 Waken'd a thirst for silence such as dwells  
 Under the ribs of death : whence slowly grew  
 Old instincts that had tranced me to tears  
 In mine unsinew'd boyhood, precious dreams  
 That swing like censers spilling balmy oils  
 O'er poppy flowers of sleep, mild sympathies  
 Full of faint odours and of music faint  
 Like buds of roses blowing !

So held I solemn tryst with Memory—  
 Who, with the pale babe Hope upon her breast,  
 Sits haggard, hooded underneath blue night,  
 Looking on heaven, and seeking evermore  
 To call to mind her dwelling-place  
 Where Hope was born, beyond the silent stars.

Then at last  
 Fair-statured, noble, like an awful thing  
 Frozen upon the very verge of life,  
 And looking back along eternity  
 With rayless eyes that keep the shadow Time.

Of other poems in this volume, 'Fine Weather on the Digentia,' which tells of idleness spiced with philosophy, is full of Grecian wisdom and Athenian fire, and the Bard concludes with a touching poem to his wife :

To one wild tune our swift blood went and came—

In an essay 'On My Own Tentatives,' in the volume 'David Gray, and other Essays,' Mr. Buchanan briefly enumerates the principles which have regulated his own tentative attempts at the poetry of humanity, as expressed in 'Inverburn' and 'London Poems,' the remaining two volumes of this probation period : 'That the whole significance and harmony of life are never



to be lost sight of in depicting any fragmentary form of life, and that, therefore, the poet should free himself entirely from all arbitrary systems of ethics and codes of opinion, aiming, in a word, at that thorough disinterestedness which is our only means to the true perception of God's creatures. That every fragmentary form of life is not fit for song, but that every form is so fit which can be spiritualised without the introduction of false elements to the final literary form of harmonious numbers. That failing the heroic stature and the noble features, almost every human figure becomes idealised whenever we take into consideration the background of life, or picture, or sentiment on which it moves; and that it is to this background a poet must often look for the means of casting over his picture the refruent colour of poetic harmony. That the true clue to poetic success of this kind is the intensity of the poet's own insight, whereby a dramatic situation, however undignified, however vulgar to the unimaginative, is made to intersect through the medium of lyrical emotion with the entire mystery of human life, and thus to appeal with more or less force to every heart that has felt the world. . . .'

It was the poet's business, not to preach morality, not to inculcate intellectuality, not to describe this or that form of life as finally and significantly holy, but to be just, without judgment to the pathos and powers of all he saw or apprehended. The accessories must be laid aside, the conventionalities disregarded,

and the deep human heart laid bare. The only bond incumbent on the poet was the artistic one. It was not enough merely to represent life—it was necessary that the representatives should be beautiful. It was not enough to mirror truth—the truth must be spiritualised. It was not enough to catch the speech of man or woman—that speech must be subtly set to music.

With these views he wrote the poems of 'Inverburn,' a series of dramatic soliloquies put into the mouth of certain poor folk—figures seen on the background of a familiar Scottish village :

The clachan with its humming sound of looms,  
The quaint old gables, roofs of turf and thatch,  
The glimmering spire that peeps above the fir,  
The stream whose soft blue arms encircle all,—  
And in the background heathery norland hills,  
Hued like the azure of the dew-berrie,  
And mingling with the regions of the Rain !

Of the fifteen poems in this volume of 'Idyls and Legends,' in both 'Willie Baird' and 'Poet Andrew' Mr. Buchanan, in his own words, attempts perfect ideal backgrounds, the power and dreamy influences of Nature in the one case, and the intense glow of great human emotion in the other. Of the whole series, Mr. George Henry Lewes said : 'If we look closely into these poems, we shall be struck with the fact that, although quite free from mannerism or eccentricity, his thought and style are distinctly his own. While reading the poems you never think of the poet. It is only in the afterglow of emotion you think of him, and then you know what rare power was needed to

produce so genuine an effect.' The poems are, to echo Mr. R. H. Hutton, 'simple and transparent in structure as a crystal. No one can know what true poetry is who does not feel its breath in every line.'

'Willie Baird,' the first of the poems, 'a winter idyl and an old man's tale, a tale for men grey-haired, who wear, through second childhood, to the Lord,' is the soliloquy of a Scottish dominie, of no particular 'licht,' neither Erastian nor Moderate, but a dominie with the pathos and dreaminess of those born and evolved amongst the hills, one who, when he went to college and heard the murmur of the busy street round him in a dream,

Only saw

The clouds that snow around the mountain-tops,  
The mists that chase the phantom of the moon  
In lonely mountain tarns,—and heard the while,  
Not footsteps sounding hollow to and fro,  
But winds sough-soughing thro' the woods of pine.

In the construction of this tragedy of simple Scottish life, the poet has not put forth any great wings for ambitious flight. The story is a simple one of affection between dominie and boy, and a third—a dog, about whom, in the intervals of Bible instruction, the boy asks, 'Do doggies gang to heaven?' The dominie is a man of an uncomplicated type, but with a gift of insight and a hand close gripping the mysteries of Nature, who yearns for

Such tiny truths as only bloom  
Like red-tipt gowans at the hallanstone,  
Or kindle softly, flashing bright at times,  
In fuffing cottage fires!

And as for the boy :

When I look'd in Willie's stainless eyes  
I saw the empty ether floating grey  
O'er shadowy mountains murmuring low with winds ;  
And often when, in his old-fashion'd way,  
He question'd me, I seem'd to hear a voice  
From far away, that mingled with the cries  
Haunting the regions where the round red sun  
Is all alone with God among the snow.

We hear much of their talks about the simple  
things of Nature, and, the dominie's tales of men  
of old, of Wallace and Bruce, and the sweet lady  
on the Scottish throne,

Whose crown was colder than a band of ice,  
Yet seem'd a sunny crown whene'er she smiled ;

the poem ending with the tragedy of the snow-  
storm, and Willie's death ; and we are told that  
in death, on his face was

A smile—yet not a smile—a dim pale light  
Such as the Snow keeps in its own soft wings ;

while his soul was

Far far away beyond the norland hills,  
Beyond the silence of the untrodden snow.

None of these idyls lend themselves well for the  
purposes of extraction. The simplicity and direct-  
ness of the story is as a web that binds line to line,  
and their success is achieved by the very uncon-  
sciousness of the effort which shuns rhetoric.

'Poet Andrew,' though not to be read as liter-  
ally interpreting all the facts of David Gray's life,  
yet has for its groundwork a true experience.

It holds, along with 'Willie Baird,' the places of honour in the collection, and tells of how the poet, doomed for the inevitable pulpit (the cherished career for the son of every Scot, weaver or farmer, with an ambition), drifted into poetry and was crowned dying. The ambition is expressed thus :

And years wore on ; and year on year was cheer'd  
By thoughts of Andrew, drest in decent black,  
Throned in a Pulpit, preaching out the Word,  
A house his own, and all the country-side  
To touch their bonnets to him ;

followed by the 'horrible discovery' that the lad was bent on idle rhymes.

The beauteous dream  
Of the good Preacher in his braw black dress,  
With house and income snug, began to fade  
Before the picture of a drunken loon  
Bawling out songs beneath the moon and stars,—  
Of poet Willie Clay, who wrote a book  
About King Robert Bruce, and aye got fou,  
And scatter'd stars in verse, and aye got fou,  
Wept the world's sins, and then got fou again,—  
Of Fergusson, the feckless limb o' law,—  
And Robin Burns, who gauged the whisky-casks  
And brake the seventh commandment.

Then comes the story of the illness, the creeping on of Death, the shadowing of those that watch, and the last words, 'Out of the Snow, the Snow-drop—out of Death comes Life,' words that reflect the steadfast faith of the poet.

Of other poems, 'The English Huswife's Gossip,' according to the poet himself, 'lacks the background, touches nowhere on the great universal chords of sympathy, and is insomuch unsuccessful

as a poem.' 'The Two Babes' is also, as the poet describes, 'a mixed business.'

'Hugh Sutherland's Pansies' can be classed with 'Willie Baird' in its idyllic tenderness and beauty; and 'The Widow Mysie,' an idyl of love and whisky, is as fine a piece of pastoral humour as is to be found outside of 'A Midsummer-Night's Dream.' We are told of him who

Rather would have sat with crimson face  
Upon the cutty-stool with Jean or Grace,  
Than buy in kirk a partner with the power  
To turn the mountain dew of Freedom sour,

and who went a-courting the Widow Mysie,

An angel in a cloud of toddy steam,

who proved so unfaithful and, need we add, so canny, as to marry the lover's father—for that way lay the 'siller,' and yet, in meditating on the iron rule of the grey mare, and on his own single blessedness, is content. Besides these poems of the village, the book is enriched by several very characteristic poems of Gnomes, Elfin, and Fays, and includes one of the most often quoted of Mr. Buchanan's poems, 'The Legend of the Stepmother.'

In 'London Poems,' wrote Mr. Buchanan, 'I was at least a great deal juster to the rude forces of life, my sympathy was bolder and more confident, my soul clearer and more trustworthy as a medium, however poor might be my power of perfect artistic spiritualisation. As common life was approached more closely, as the danger of

vulgarity threatened more and more to interfere with the reader's sense of beauty, the stronger and tenderer was the lyrical note needed. In writing such poems as "Liz" and "Nell," the intensest dramatic care was necessary to escape vulgarity on the one hand, and false refinement on the other. "Liz," although the offspring of the very lowest social deposits, possesses great natural intelligence, and speaks more than once with a refinement consequent on strange purity of thought. Moreover, she has been under spiritual influences. She is a beautiful living soul, just conscious of the unfitness of the atmosphere she is breathing, but, above all, she is a large-hearted woman, with wonderful capacity for loving. She is, on the whole, quite an exceptional study, although in many of her moods typical of her class. "Nell" is not so exceptional, and since it is harder to create types than eccentricities, her utterance was far more difficult to spiritualise into music. She is a woman, quite without refined instincts, coarse, uncultured, impulsive. Her love, though profound, is insufficient to escape mere commonplace; and it was necessary to breathe around her the fascination of a tragic subject, the lurid light of an ever-deepening terror. In the "language" of both these poems I followed Nature as closely as possible—so far as poetic speech can follow ordinary speech. I had to add nothing, but to deduct whatever hid, instead of expressing, the natural meaning of the speakers; for to obtrude slips of grammar, misspellings, and other mean-

ingless blotches—in short, to lay undue emphasis on the mere language employed, would have been wilfully to destroy the artistic verisimilitude of such poems. Every stronger stress, every more noticeable trick of style, added after the speech was sufficient to hint the quality of the speaker, was so much over-truth, offending against the truth's harmony. The object was, while clearly conveying the caste of the speakers, to afford an artistic insight into their souls, and to blend them with the great universal mysteries of life and death. Vulgarity obtruded is not truth spiritualised and made clear, but truth still hooded and masked, and little likely to reveal anything to the vision of its contemplators. By at least one critic I have been charged with idealising the speech a little too much. Both "Liz" and "Nell," it is averred, occasionally speak in a strain very uncommon in their class. In reply to this, I may observe how much mispronunciations, vulgarisms, and the like, have blinded educated people to the wonderful force and picturesqueness of the language of the lower classes. They know nothing of the educated luxury of using language in order to conceal thought, but speak because they have something to say, and try to explain themselves as forcibly as possible.'

The 'London Poems,' for which Mr. Buchanan was upbraided by a contemporary for having written 'Idyls of the gallows and the gutter, and singing songs of costermongers and their trulls,' completes the trilogy of probation poems. In the



year 1866, tales of mean streets were not yet idealised in the medium of artistic expression, although 'the good genie of fiction,' Charles Dickens, was already reaping the harvest of his masterpieces. In these latter days it is different, and it needs even no idealising and spiritualising to secure the approbation of the critics as long as art is conceived for art's sake. To the present writer, if he may be allowed to enter a personal note on the subject, there is in these poems the record and the suggestion of experiences and sensations sufficient to paint most of the comedies and tragedies of life. Down many infernal stairs the heirs of heaven are seen arising. And looking back across the whole field of the poet's work, the recollection of these poems, tragic in their interests, true in their perspective, and eloquent beyond words in the very simplicity but forcibleness of their language, 'becomes a sound of friendship in still places.'

The story of 'The Little Milliner,' the first of the series, is a simple story of 'love in an attic,' spoken in the language of a city clerk.

She on the topmost floor, I just below ;  
She, a poor milliner, content and wise,  
I, a poor city clerk, with hopes to rise.

'The Little Milliner,' far from drooping in the city, found there a constant round of joy from day to day.

And London streets, with all their noise and stir,  
Had many a pleasant sight to pleasure her.  
There were the shops, where wonders ever new,  
As in a garden, changed the whole year through.

Of would she stand and watch with laughter sweet  
The Punch and Judy in the quiet street ;  
Or look and listen while soft minnets  
Play'd the street organ with the marionettes ;  
Or joined the motley group of merry folks  
Round the street huckster with his wares and jokes.  
Fearless and glad, she join'd the crowd that flows  
Along the streets at festivals and shows.  
In summer time she loved the parks and squares,  
Where fine folk drive their carriages and pairs ;  
In winter time her blood was in a glow  
At the white coming of the pleasant snow ;  
And in the stormy nights, when dark rain pours,  
She found it pleasant, too, to sit indoors,  
And sing and sew, and listen to the gales,  
Or read the penny journal with the tales.

She was a large-hearted little woman, with no  
scorn for 'those who lived amiss' :

The weary women with their painted bliss ;

only wondering 'if their mothers lived and knew,'  
and speaking a gentle word if spoken to. It is  
a simple story, without any of the deeper chords  
of 'Nell,' or 'Liz,' or 'Jane Lewson.' 'It was,'  
says Mr. Buchanan, 'clearly my endeavour, in this  
poem, to evolve the fine Arcadian feeling out of  
the dullest obscurity, to show how even brick  
walls and stone houses may be made to blossom,  
as it were, into blooms and flowers—to produce,  
by delicate passion and sweet emotion, an effect  
similar to that which pastoral poets have pro-  
duced by means of greenery and bright sunshine.  
In close connection with all that is dark and  
solitary in London life, the little milliner was to  
walk in a light such as lies on country fields,  
exhibiting, as a critic happily phrases it, 'all the

passion of youth, modulated by all the innocence of a naked baby.'

'Liz' is a very different business. Here we have the 'wearying, ever wearying for sleep,' which is the keynote of much of the poet's insight. It is a soliloquy put into the mouth of a flower-girl of nineteen years of age, dying on the morning of her child's birth. She tells her simple story to the Parson :

It does not seem that I was born. I woke,  
One day, long, long ago, in a dark room,  
And saw the housetops round me in the smoke,  
And, leaning out, look'd down into the gloom,  
Saw deep black pits, blank walls, and broken panes,  
And eyes, behind the panes, that flash'd at me,  
And heard an awful roaring, from the lanes,  
Of folk I could not see ;  
Then, while I look'd and listen'd in a dream,  
I turn'd my eyes upon the housetops grey,  
And saw, between the smoky roofs, a gleam  
Of silver water, winding far away.  
That was the River. Cool and smooth and deep,  
It glided to the sound o' folk below,  
Dazzling my eyes, till they began to grow  
Dusty and dim with sleep.  
Oh, sleepily I stood, and gazed, and hearken'd !  
And saw a strange, bright light, that slowly fled,  
Shine through the smoky mist, and stain it red,  
And suddenly the water flash'd,—then darken'd ;  
And for a little time, though I gazed on,  
The river and the sleepy light were gone ;  
But suddenly, over the roofs there lighten'd  
A pale, strange brightness out of heaven shed,  
And, with a sweep that made me sick and frighten'd,  
The yellow Moon roll'd up above my head ;—  
And down below me roar'd the noise o' trade,  
And ah ! I felt alive, and was afraid,  
And cold, and hungry, crying out for bread.

And then she dwells on what she counted the pleasures of life up in their attic near the sky :

Yet, Parson, there were pleasures fresh and fair,  
To make the time pass happily up there :  
A steamboat going past upon the tide,  
A pigeon lighting on the roof close by,  
The sparrows teaching little ones to fly,  
The small white moving clouds, that we espied,  
And thought were living, in the bit of sky—  
With sights like these right glad were Ned and I.

How one day, sick of hunger, cold, and strife,  
she took a sudden fancy to see the country, and,  
like a guilty person, stole out of the smoke into  
the sun :

I'll ne'er forget that day. All was so bright  
And strange. Upon the grass around my feet  
The rain had hung a million drops of light ;  
The air, too, was so clear and warm and sweet,  
It seem'd a sin to breathe it. All around  
Were hills and fields and trees that trembled through  
A burning, blazing fire of gold and blue ;  
And there was not a sound,  
Save a bird singing, singing in the skies,  
And the soft wind, that ran along the ground,  
And blew so sweetly on my lips and eyes.  
Then, with my heavy hand upon my chest,  
Because the bright air pain'd me, trembling, sighing,  
I stole into a dewy field to rest,  
And oh ! the green, green grass where I was lying  
Was fresh and living—and the bird sang loud,  
Out of a golden cloud—  
And I was looking up at him and crying !

But she never saw the country more.

I would not stay out yonder if I could.  
For one feels dead, and all looks pure and good,—  
I could not bear a light so bright and still.

She breathed happily only in the deep miasma of  
the city, and all she cared for was sleep.

All that I want is sleep,  
Under the flags and stones, so deep, so deep !  
God won't be hard on one so mean, but He,

Perhaps, will let a tired girl slumber sound  
 There in the deep cold darkness underground ;  
 And I shall waken up in time, may be,  
 Better and stronger, not afraid to see  
 The great, still Light that folds Him round and round !

Two companion pieces, 'The Starling' and 'The Linnet,' are what the poet calls 'bird poems,' where by natural laws of association, and in very different ways, a caged starling and a caged linnet are made to flash upon their owners wild or bright glimpses of the outlying districts from which they come. The starling was the property of a little lame tailor, who 'sat stitching and snarling,' and whose end is expressed thus :

Felt life past bearing,  
 And shivering, quaking,  
 All hope forsaking,  
 Died swearing ;

the linnet belonging to a sempstress, and recalling for her the scenes and airs of her old life in the country.

'Jane Lewson' is a study in the holy self-abnegation of motherhood, and is painted in lines vigorous and inspiring. Jane Lewson is a veritable 'heir of heaven,' although at times in her woe

She thought the great cold God above her head  
 Dwelt on a frosty throne and did not hear.

The basis of the story is a familiar one of seduction, but the tragedy and the nobility lie in the effort made by the mother to hide from her child the secret of its birth and her 'shame.' The child was

A passion-flower !—a maiden whose rich heart  
 Burn'd with intensest fire that turn'd the light

Of the sweet eyes into a warm dark dew ;  
 One of those shapes so marvellously made,  
 Strung so intensely, that a finger-press,  
 The dropping of a stray curl unaware  
 Upon the naked breast, a look, a tone,  
 Can vibrate to the very roots of life,  
 And draw from out the spirit light that seems  
 To scorch the tender cheeks it shines upon ;  
 A nature running o'er with ecstasy  
 Of very being, an appalling splendour  
 Of animal sensation, loveliness  
 Like to the dazzling panther's ; yet, withal,  
 The gentle, wilful, clinging sense of love,  
 Which makes a virgin's soul.

**With steadfast idea the mother kept silent :**

The dull nature clung  
 Still unto silence, with the still resolve  
 Of mightier natures,

and bore the insults and contempt of two prim  
 'holy' sisters with the never-despairing fortitude  
 of an unconscious martyr.

'Edward Crowhurst,' labourer, writes poems  
 with

A crystal clearness, as of running brooks,  
 A music, as of green boughs murmuring,  
 A peeping of fresh thoughts in shady places  
 Like violets new-blown, a gleam of dewdrops,  
 A sober, settled, greenness of repose,—  
 And lying over all, in level beams,  
 Transparent, sweet, and unmistakable,  
 The light that never was on sea or land ;

and echoed

The pathos and the power of common life.

A simple man, he is a sky-gazer and a dreamer.  
 His poems are published, and then

Every morn  
 Came papers full of things about the Book,  
 And letters full of cheer from distant folk ;  
 And Teddy toil'd away, and tried his best

To keep his glad heart humble. Then, one day  
 A smirking gentleman, with inky thumbs,  
 Call'd, chatted, pried with little fox's eyes  
 This way and that, and when he went away  
 He wrote a heap of lying scribble, styled  
 'A Summer Morning with the Labourer Bard !'  
 Then others came : some, mild young gentlemen,  
 Who chirp'd, and blush'd, and simper'd, and were gone ;  
 Some, shallow ladies wearing spectacles,  
 And pale young misses, rolling languid eyes,  
 And pecking at the words my Teddy spake  
 Like sparrows picking seed.

And following that begins the downward path, the journey to London, the feasting, the old story of the flattery of genius by commonplace—Burns over again,—the return to the country, and then that other change which comes in the lives of most men of untutored genius :

A change had come,  
 As dreadful as the change within himself.  
 The papers wrote the praise of newer men,  
 And strange folk sent him letters scarce at all,  
 And when he spake about another book,  
 The man in London wrote a hasty 'No !'

His fine-day friends like swallows wing'd away,  
 The summer being o'er.

'Artist and Model' is interesting as expressing more than once, in simple terms, the relation of the artist to his work.

Nay, beauty is all our wisdom,—  
 We painters demand no more.

Since the truth we artists fall for,  
 Is the truth that looks the truth.

Enough to labour and labour,  
 And to feel one's heart beat right.

Yet the beauty the heart would utter  
 Endeth in agony ;  
 And life is a climbing, a seeking  
 Of something we never can see !  
 And death is a slumber, a dreaming  
 Of something that may not be !

And when God takes much, my darling,  
 He leaves us the colour and form,—  
 The scorn of the nations is bitter,  
 But the touch of a hand is warm.

Of other poems, 'Barbara Gray' has a distinct genius of its own. The story is of a woman loved for the first time late in life, soliloquising over the dead body of her 'dwarf' lover.

For where was man had stoop'd to me before,  
 Though I was maiden still, and girl no more ?  
 Where was the spirit that had deign'd to prize  
 The poor plain features and the envious eyes ?  
 What lips had whisper'd warmly in mine ears ?  
 When had I known the passion and the tears ?  
 Till he I look on sleeping came unto me,  
 Found me among the shadows, stoop'd to woo me,  
 Seized on the heart that flutter'd withering here,  
 Stung it and wrung it with new joy and fear,  
 Yea, brought the rapturous light, and brought the day,  
 Waken'd the dead heart, withering away,  
 Put thorns and roses on the unhonour'd head,  
 That felt but roses till the roses fled !  
 Who, who, but he crept unto sunless ground,  
 Content to prize the faded face he found ?  
 John Hamerton, I pardon all—sleep sound, my love, sleep  
 sound !

On the whole, it is the most original of the poems in the volume, and is gifted with a fine disdain, an abandon and a pathos which render it quite perfect as an artistic effort.

At the end of these poems of the city is appended a series of lines entitled 'London, 1864' which are of so directly personal a nature, and



express so clearly the condition of the poet's soul, that we are constrained to print them here in full, notwithstanding their length. It will help those who know the poet only slightly, if at all, to grasp at a keynote of his aspirations that may assist them to understand more clearly many things expressed before, and more things to be expressed or hinted at later.

## I.

Why should the heart seem stiller,  
As the song grows stronger and surer?  
Why should the brain grow chillier,  
And the utterance clearer and purer?  
To lose what the people are gaining  
Seems often bitter as gall,  
Though to sink in the proud attaining  
Were the bitterest of all.  
I would to God I were lying  
Yonder 'mong mountains blue,  
Chasing the morn with flying  
Feet in the morning dew!  
Longing, and aching, and burning  
To conquer, to sing, and to teach,  
A passionate face upturning  
To visions beyond my reach,—  
But with never a feeling or yearning  
I could utter in tuneless speech!

## II.

Yea! that were a joy more stable  
Than all that my soul hath found,—  
Than to see and to know, and be able  
To utter the seeing in sound;  
For Art, the Angel of losses,  
Comes, with her still, grey eyes,  
Coldly my forehead crosses,  
Whispers to make me wise;  
And, too late, comes the revelation,  
After the feast and the play,  
That she works God's dispensation  
By cruelly taking away:

By burning the heart and steeling,  
Scorching the spirit deep,  
And changing the flower of feeling,  
To a poor dried flower that may keep  
What wonder if much seems hollow,  
The passion, the wonder dies ;  
And I hate the angel I follow,  
And shrink from her passionless eyes,—  
Who, instead of the rapture of being  
I held as the poet's dower—  
Instead of the glory of seeing,  
The impulse, the splendour, the power—  
Instead of merrily blowing  
A trumpet proclaiming the day,  
Gives, for her sole bestowing,  
A pipe whereon to play !  
While the spirit of boyhood hath faded,  
And never again can be,  
And the singing seemeth degraded,  
Since the glory hath gone from me,—  
Though the glory around me and under,  
And the earth and the air and the sea,  
And the manifold music and wonder,  
Are grand as they used to be !

## III.

Is there a consolation  
For the joy that comes never again ?  
Is there a reservation ?  
Is there a refuge from pain ?  
Is there a gleam of gladness  
To still the grief and the stinging ?  
Only the sweet, strange sadness,  
That is the source of the singing.

## IV.

For the sound of the city is weary,  
As the people pass to and fro,  
And the friendless faces are dreary,  
As they come, and thrill through us, and go ;  
And the ties that bind us the nearest  
Of our error and weakness are born ;  
And our dear ones ever love dearest  
Those parts of ourselves that we scorn ;

And the weariness will not be spoken,  
 And the bitterness dare not be said,  
 The silence of souls is unbroken,  
 And we hide ourselves from our Dead !  
 And what, then, secures us from madness ?  
 Dear ones, or fortune, or fame ?  
 Only the sweet singing sadness  
 Cometh between us and shame.

## V.

And there dawneth a time to the Poet,  
 When the bitterness passes away,  
 With none but his God to know it,  
 He kneels in the dark to pray ;  
 And the prayer is turn'd into singing,  
 And the singing findeth a tongue,  
 And Art, with her cold hands clinging,  
 Comforts the soul she has stung.  
 Then the Poet, holding her to him,  
 Findeth his loss is his gain :  
 The sweet singing sadness thrills through him,  
 Though nought of the glory remain ;  
 And the awful sound of the city,  
 And the terrible faces around,  
 Take a truer, tenderer pity,  
 And pass into sweetness and sound ;  
 The mystery deepens to thunder,  
 Strange vanishings gleam from the cloud,  
 And the Poet, with pale lips asunder,  
 Stricken, and smitten, and bow'd,  
 Starteth at times from his wonder,  
 And sendeth his Soul up aloud !

In later editions there are included several additional poems, of which 'The Wake of Tim O'Hara' is perhaps the most characteristic, and conveys in a striking sense the gift of tears mingled with the gift of laughter, Mr. Buchanan's never-failing possessions. Of the others, 'Kitty Kemble' is a noteworthy piece of poetical biography, full of knowledge of the startling blending of footlight egoism with the tragedy of

the merely human. How true to life are these touches :

The town's delight, the beaux', the critics', Kitty !  
 The brightest wonder human eye could see  
 In good old Comedy :  
 A smile, a voice, a laugh, a look, a form,  
 To take the world by storm !  
 A dainty dimpling intellectual treasure  
 To give old stagers pleasure !  
 A rippling radiant cheek—a roguish eye—  
 That made the youngsters sigh !  
 And thus beneath a tinsell'd pasteboard Star  
 At once you mounted your triumphant car,  
 O'er burning hearts your chariot wheels were driven,  
 Bouquets came rolling down like rain from heaven,  
 And on we dragged you, Kitty, while you stood  
 Roguish and great, not innocent and good,  
 The Queen Elect of all Light Womanhood !

And in contrast :

As we had done ; so our poor Kitty came  
 To be the lonely ghost of a great name—  
 A worn and wanton woman, not yet sage  
 Nor wearied out, tho' sixty years of age,  
 Wrinkled and rouged, and with false teeth of pearl,  
 And the shrill laughter of a giddy girl ;  
 Haunting, with painted cheek and powder'd brow,  
 The private boxes, as spectator now ;  
 Both day and night, indeed, invited out  
 To private picnic and to public rout,  
 Because thy shrill laugh and thy ready joke  
 Ever enlivened up the festal folk.

And then :

And here's the end of all. And on thy bed  
 Thou liest, Kitty Kemble, lone and dead ;  
 And on thy clammy cheek there lingers faint  
 The deep dark stain of a life's rouge and paint ;  
 And, Kitty, all thy sad days and thy glad  
 Have left thee lying for thy last part clad,  
 Cold, silent, on the earthly Stage ; and while  
 Thou liest there with dark and dreadful smile,

The feverish footlights of the World flash bright  
Into thy face with a last ghastly light ;  
And while thy friends all sighing rise to go,  
The great black Curtain droppeth, slow, slow, slow.

God help us ! We spectators turn away ;  
Part sad, we think, part merry, was the Play.  
God help the lonely player now she stands  
Behind the darken'd scenes with wondering face,  
And gropes her way at last, with clay-cold hands,  
Out of the dingy place,  
Turning towards Home, poor worn and weary one,  
Now the last scene is done.

In addition to the 'London Poems' there are included in the volume four other pieces of a miscellaneous nature, of which 'The Death of Roland' and 'The Scaith o' Bartle' are the more ambitious. Consideration of these we must postpone till we come to consider in a separate chapter several other poems that can be placed in the same category, of which 'The Battle of Drumliemoor' and 'The Lights of Leith' are notable examples.

In the three volumes which have been thus subjected to such a hurried consideration, we have caught sight of some of the tendencies which are the foundation of the Buchanan of the later periods. Beliefs and hopes that in those days were glaring in their simplicity, may have become, if not dimmed, yet modified, but in the spirit of the work there is little alteration except that which springs from a natural growth. And if, says the poet :

I list to sing of sad things oft,  
It is that sad things in this life of breath

Are truest, sweetest, deepest. Tears bring forth  
The richness of our nature, as the rain  
Sweetens the smelling brier, and I, thank God,  
Have anguish'd here in no ignoble tears,  
Tears for the pale friend with the singing life,  
Tears for the father with the gentle eyes  
(My dearest up in heaven next to God)  
Who loved me like a woman. I have wrought  
No garland of the rose and passion-flower  
Grown in a careful garden in the sun ;  
But I have gathered samphire dizzily  
Close to the hollow roaring of a sea.

## CHAPTER III

### 'THE BOOK OF ORM'

An interval of four years brings us in 1870 to the publication of 'The Book of Orm,' in other words, 'The Book of the Visions seen by Orm the Celt.' In this volume, which, by the poet's own confession, strikes the personal keynote to all his work, the poet enters boldly into the lights and shadows of mystic realism. Here, in the character of Orm the Celt, the poet brings himself face to face with the mysteries of life and death; here he attempts to grapple with the unseen; dreams of an uplifted veil; has visions of man's birth, rise, and fall; and sees with the eye of the poet the lonely God who neither can nor will help the human sufferer in his desire for knowledge, peace, rest, and, perhaps, forgetfulness:

There is a mortal, and his name is Orm,  
Born in the evening of the world, and looking  
Back from the sunset to the gates of morning.

In 'The First Song of the Veil' we are told how 'Ere Man grew, the Veil was woven bright and blue,' and how this veil 'the beautiful Master' drew over his face:

Then starry, luminous,  
 Rolled the Veil of azure  
 O'er the first dwellings  
 Of mortal race ;  
 —And since the beginning  
 No mortal vision,  
 Pure or sinning,  
 Hath seen the Face

Yet mark me closely !  
 Strongly I swear,  
 Seen or seen not,  
 The Face is *there* !  
 When the Veil is clearest  
 And sunniest,  
 Closest and nearest  
 The Face is prest ;  
 But when, grown weary  
 With long downlooking,  
 The Face withdrawing  
 For a time is gone,  
 The great Veil darkens,  
 And ye see full clearly  
 Glittering numberless  
 The gems thereon.  
 For the lamp of his features  
 Divinely burning,  
 Shines, and suffuses  
 The Veil with light,  
 And the Face, drawn backward  
 With that deep sighing  
 Ye hear in the gloaming,  
 Leaveth the Night.

And thus men as they journeyed graveward,  
 ‘evermore hoping, evermore seeking, nevermore  
 guessing, crying, denying, questioning, dreaming,’  
 nevermore certain, evermore craved to look on a  
 token, to gaze on the Face, in vain. Next we  
 have a picture of Earth the Mother :

Beautiful, beautiful, she lay below,  
 The mighty Mother of humanity,  
 Turning her sightless eyeballs to the glow  
 Of light she could not see.



Feeling the happy warmth, and breathing slow  
 As if her thoughts were shining tranquilly.  
 Beautiful, beautiful the Mother lay,  
 Crowned with silver spray,  
 The greenness gathering hushfully around  
 The peace of her great heart, while on her breast  
 The wayward Waters, with a weeping sound,  
 Were sobbing into rest.  
 For all day long her face shone merrily,  
 And at its smile the waves leapt mad and free :  
 But at the darkening of the Vell, she drew  
 The wild things to herself, and hush'd their cries.  
 Then, stiller, dumber, search'd the deepening Blue  
 With passionate blind eyes ;  
 And went the old life over in her thought,  
 Dreamily playing as her memory wrought  
 The dimly guess'd at, never utter'd tale,  
 While, over her dreaming,  
 Deepen'd the luminous,  
 Star-inwrought, beautiful,  
 Folds of the wondrous Vell.

### And the poet tells us how

In the beginning, long ago,  
 Without a Vell looked down the Face ye know,  
 And Earth, an infant happy-eyed and bright,  
 Look'd smiling up, and gladden'd in its sight.  
 But later, when the Man Flower from her womb  
 Burst into brightening bloom,  
 In her glad eyes a golden dust was blown  
 Out of the Void, and she was blind as stone.

And since that day  
 She hath not seen, nor spoken,—lest her say  
 Should be a sorrow and fear to mortal race,  
 And doth not know the Lord hath hid away,  
 But turneth up blind orbs—to feel the Face.

### The voices of the Children of Earth are heard crying :

'O Mother ! Mother  
 Of mortal race !  
 Is there a Father ?  
 Is there a Face ?'

She felt their sorrow  
Against her cheek,—  
She could not hearken,  
She could not speak ;

and although the Master answers from the thunder-cloud, 'I am God the Maker, I am God the Master, I am God the Father,' Earth and her children neither saw nor heard. The Wise Men are called into view, and looming there lonely, they search the Veil wonderful 'with tubes fire-fashioned in caverns below,' and we are told in a striking line that

God withdrew backward,

and after long searching, in which blindness met some, and death others, the remainder creep slowly back from the heights to which they had ascended, crying out :

'Bury us deep when dead—  
We have travelled a weary road,  
We have seen no more than ye.  
'Twere better not to be—  
There is no God !'

And the people, hearkening,  
Saw the Veil above them,  
And the darkness deepen'd,  
And the Lights gleamed pale.  
Ah ! the lamps numberless,  
The mystical jewels of God,  
The luminous, wonderful,  
Beautiful Lights of the Veil !

## Part II. is entitled 'The Man and the Shadow.'

On the high path where few men fare,  
Orm meeteth one with hoary hair,  
And speaketh, solemn und afraid,  
Of that which haunteth him—a Shade.

E

The lonely man sitteth with downcast eyes,  
motionless :

Thou broodest moveless, letting yonder sun  
Make thee a Dial, worn and venerable,  
To show the passing hour.

The old man's 'withered flesh is scented with a  
Soul,' and Orm is filled with joy

To meet  
A royal face like thine ; to touch the hand  
Of such a soul-fellow ; to feel the want,  
The upward-crying hunger, the desire,  
The common hope and pathos, justified  
By knowledge and grey hairs.

He talks to him of life and its meaning, of the shadows which haunt us to the grave, and of the mystery beyond. They climb together higher, yet higher, though the path is steep, and take a view of the many-coloured picture before them, the immeasurable mountains, the glassy ocean like a sheet of mother-o'-pearl, and the sky—that field of dreamy blue 'wherein the rayless crescent of the midday Moon lies like a reaper's sickle'—and there Orm asks :

What magic ? What Magician ? O my Brother,  
What strange Magician, mixing up those tints,  
Pouring the water down, and sending forth  
The crystal air like breath, showing the heavens  
With luminous jewels of the day and night,  
Look'd down, and saw thee lie a lifeless clod,  
And lifted thee, and moulded thee to shape,  
Colour'd thee with the sunlight till thy blood  
Ran ruby, poured the chemic tints o' the air  
Through eyes that kindled into azure, stole  
The flesh tints of the lily and the rose  
To make thee wondrous fair unto thyself,  
Knitted thy limbs with ruby bands, and blew  
Into thy hollow heart until it stirred,—

**and pointing to the vales, he continues :**

Below, a Storm of people like to thee  
Drifts with thee westward darkly, cloud on cloud,  
Uttering a common moan, and to our eyes  
Casting one common shadow ; yet each Soul  
Therein now seeketh, with a want like thine,  
The inevitable bourne. Nor those alone,  
Thy perishable brethren, share thy want,  
And wander haunted through the world ; but Beasts,  
With that dumb hunger in their eyes, project  
Their darkness—by the yearning Lambkin's side  
Its shade plays, and the basking Lizard hath  
Its image on the flat stone in the sun,—  
And these, the greater and the less, like thee  
Shall perish in their season : in the mere  
The slender Water-Lily sees her shape,  
And sheddeth softly on the summer air  
Her last chill breathing ; and the forest Tree  
That, standing glorious for a hundred years,  
Lengthens its shadow daily from the sun,  
Fulfilleth its own prophecy at last,  
And falleth, falleth. Art thou comforted ?

**Orm speaks on, of the wild desires of the soul, and  
of the eternal shadow which haunts it ; of the  
blank eyes and blank souls which the seeing soul  
meets, as it wears**

Westward, to the melancholy Realm  
Where all the gather'd Shades of all the world  
Lie as a cloud around the feet of God.

**It sees the ox eye, the blank faces of brute beasts  
and small-eyed kings, the former the happier,  
'because never nameless trouble filled their eyes.'**

Lift up thine eyes, old man, and look on me :  
Like thee, a dark point in the scheme of things,  
Where the dumb Spirit that pervadeth all—  
Grass, trees, beasts, man—and lives and grows in all—  
Pauses upon itself, and awe-struck feels  
The shadow of the next and imminent

*Transfiguration.* So, a living *Man* /  
 That entity within whose brooding brain  
 Knowledge begins and ends—that point in time  
 When Time becomes the Shadow of a Dial,—  
 That dreadful living and corporeal Hour,  
 Who, wafted by an unseen Hand apart  
 From the wild rush of temporal things that pass,  
 Pauses and listens,—listening sees his face  
 Glased in still waters of Eternity,—  
 Gazes in awe at his own loveliness,  
 And fears it,—glanceth with affrighted eyes  
 Backward and forward, and beholds all dark,  
 Alike the place whence he unconscious came,  
 And that to which he conscious drifteth on,—  
 Yet seeth before him, wheresoe'er he turn,  
 The Shadow of himself, presaging doom.

The old man speaks and calls out that he sees

Shadowa! I see them—all the Shadows—see!  
 Uprising from the wild green sea of graves  
 That beats forlorn about the shores of earth.  
 Shadows—behold them!—how they gather and gather,  
 More and yet more, darker and darker yet;  
 Drifting with a low moan of mystery  
 Upward, still upward, till they almost touch  
 The bright dim edge of the Bow, but there they pause,  
 Struggling in vain against a breath from heaven,  
 And blacken. Hark! their sound is like a Sea!  
 Above them, with how dim a light divine,  
 Burneth the Bow,—and lo! it is a Bridge,  
 Dim, many-colour'd, strangely brightening,  
 Whereon, all faint and fair and shadowless,  
 Spirits like those, with faces I remember,  
 With a low sound like the soft rain in spring,  
 With a faint echo of the cradle-song,  
 Coming and going, beckon me! I come!  
 Who holds me? Touch me not. O help! I am called!  
 Ah!

And dies, and as his soul passes, Orm asks:

Art thou free?  
 Dost thou still hunger upward seeking rest,  
 Because some new horizon, strange as ours,  
 Shuts out the prospect of the place of peace?  
 Art thou a wave that, having broken once,

Gatherest up a glorious crest once more,  
And glimmerest onward,—but to break again;  
Or dost thou smooth thyself to perfect peace  
In tranquil sight of some Eternal Shore?

No answer comes, and espying the Rainbow, he  
thus addresses it, as the Shadows gather round  
him:

The beautiful Bow of thoughts ineffable,  
Last consequence of this fair cloud of flesh!  
The dim miraculous Iris of sweet Dream!  
Rainbow of promise! Colour, Light, and Soul!  
That comes, dies, comes again, and ever draws  
Its strangest source from tears—that lives, that dies—  
That is, is not—now here, now faded wholly—  
Ever assuring, ever blessing us,  
Ever eluding, ever beckoning;  
Born of our essence, yet more strange than we.

Part III. is entitled ‘Songs of Corruption.’ The  
first of these, ‘Phantasy,’ telling of death which  
comes to take the pale wife. In the face of the  
mystery of death, the poet asks:

What art thou—  
Art thou God’s angel?  
Or art thou only  
The chilly night-wind,  
Stealing downward  
From the regions where the sun  
Dwelleth alone with his shadow  
On a waste of snow?  
Art thou the water or earth?  
Or art thou the fatal air?  
Or art thou only  
An apparition  
Made by the mist  
Of mine own eyes weeping?

the poet marvelling that one so gentle as Death  
should cast a Shadow so vast,—she, the pointing  
of whose finger

Fadeth far away,  
On the sunset-tinged edges,  
Where Man’s company ends,  
And God’s loneliness begins.

The second poem has for its title 'The Dream of the World without Death,' in which vision is pictured the possible despair of humanity at the absence of the signs of death. Instead of the bloomless face, shut eyes, and waxen fingers—nothing but wondrous parting and a blankness.

I could not see a kirkyard near or far ;  
 I thirsted for a green grave, and my vision  
 Was weary for the white gleam of a tombstone.

And the world shrieked, and the summer-time was bitter,  
 And men and women feared the air behind them !  
 And for lack of its green graves the world was hateful.

Women pour forth their cries to God to restore  
 the signs of death :

The closing of dead eyelids is not dreadful,  
 For comfort comes upon us when we close them,  
 And tears fall, and our sorrow grows familiar ;

And we can sit above them where they slumber,  
 And spin a dreamy pain into a sweetness,  
 And know indeed that we are very near them.

But to reach out empty arms is surely dreadful,  
 And to feel the hollow empty world is awful,  
 And bitter grow the silence and the distance.

There is no space for grieving or for weeping ;  
 No touch, no cold, no agony to strive with,  
 And nothing but a horror and a blankness !

'Whither, and O whither,' said the woman,  
 'O Spirit of the Lord, hast Thou conveyed them,  
 My little ones, my little son and daughter ?

'For, lo ! we wandered forth at early morning,  
 And winds were blowing round us, and their mouths  
 Blew rose-buds to the rose-buds, and their eyes

'Looked violets at the violets, and their hair  
 Made sunshine in the sunshine, and their passing  
 Left a pleasure in the dewy leaves behind them ;

'And suddenly my little son looked upward,  
And his eyes were dried like dew-drops ; and his going  
Was like a blow of fire upon my face.'

There was no comfort in the slow farewell,  
Nor gentle shutting of beloved eyes,  
Nor beautiful brooding over sleeping features.

There were no kisses on familiar faces,  
No weaving of white grave-clothes, no last pondering  
Over the still wax cheeks and folded fingers.

The vision ends :

But I awoke, and, lo ! the burthen was uplifted,  
And I prayed within the chamber where she slumbered,  
And my tears flowed fast and free, but were not bitter.

I eased my heart three days by watching near her,  
And made her pillow sweet with scent and flowers,  
And could bear at last to put her in the darkness.

And I heard the kirk-bells ringing very slowly,  
And the priests were in their vestments, and the earth  
Dripped awful on the hard wood, yet I bore it.

And I cried, 'O unseen Sender of Corruption,  
I bless Thee for the wonder of Thy mercy,  
Which softeneth the mystery and the parting.

'I bless Thee for the change and for the comfort,  
The bloomless face, shut eyes, and waxen fingers,—  
For Sleeping, and for Silence, and Corruption.'

Part IV. 'The Soul and the Dwelling,' is a fine  
imaginative flight dealing with the loneliness of  
humanity, and the vanity of the wish that soul can  
ever really mix with soul. 'Pent in each prison  
must each miraculous spirit remain.'

Not yet, not yet,  
One dweller in a mortal tenement  
Can know what secret faces hide away  
Within the neighbouring dwelling. Ah beloved,  
The mystery, the mystery ! We cry  
For God's face, who have never looked upon  
The poorest Soul's face in the wonderful  
Soul-haunted world.



And speaking of the soul he had sought in heart's blood, that of the beloved one, he tells how each cried to the other in vain.

A spirit once there dwelt  
Beside me, close as thou—two wedded souls,  
We mingled—flesh was mixed with flesh—we knew  
All joys, all unreserves of mingled life—  
Yea, not a sunbeam filled the house of one  
But touched the other's threshold. Hear me swear  
I never knew that Soul! All touch, all sound,  
All light was insufficient. The Soul, pent  
In its strange chambers, cried to mine in vain—  
We saw each other not: but oftentimes  
When I was glad, the windows of my neighbour  
Were dark and drawn, as for a funeral;  
And sometimes, when most weary of the world,  
My Soul was looking forth at dead of night,  
I saw the neighbouring dwelling brightly lit,  
The happy windows flooded full of light,  
As if a feast were being held within.  
Yet were there passing flashes, random gleams,  
Low sounds, from the inhabitant divine  
I knew not; and I shrank from some of these  
In a mysterious pain. At last, Belovèd,  
The frail fair mansion where that spirit dwelt  
Totter'd and trembled, through the wondrous flesh  
A dim sick glimmer from the fire within  
Grew fainter, fainter. 'I am going away,'  
The Spirit seemed to cry; and as it cried,  
Stood still and dim and very beautiful  
Up in the windows of the eyes—there linger'd,  
First seen, last seen, a moment, silently  
So different, more beautiful tenfold  
Than all that I had dreamed—I sobbed aloud  
'Stay! stay!' but at the one despairing word  
The spirit faded, from the hearth within  
The dim fire died with one last quivering gleam—  
The house became a ruin; and I moaned  
'God help me! 'twas herself that look'd at me!  
First seen! I never knew her face before! . . .  
Too late! too late! too late!'

Part V. 'Songs of Seeking,' contains 'The Happy Earth' 'O Unseen One!' the 'World's Mystery'

(the mystery of pain and suffering); 'The Cities,' in which the anomalies and injustices of life are mirrored; 'The Priests,' in which eternal condemnation is poured forth by 'priests in divers vestments' on the wicked; 'The Lamb of God' bleating like a thing in pain, with its bloodstains still bright; and 'Doom,' in which the poet again reiterates his steadfast belief in the immortality of all creation, to be so eloquently elaborated later in 'The Vision of the Man Accurst':

Master, if there be Doom,  
All men are bereaven !  
If, in the universe,  
One Spirit receive the curse,  
Alas for Heaven !  
If there be doom for one,  
Thou, Master, art undone.

This division also includes the beautiful 'Flower of the World.'

Wherever men sinned and wept,  
I wandered in my quest ;  
At last in a Garden of God  
I saw the Flower of the World.

This Flower had human eyes,  
Its breath was the breath of the mouth ;  
Sunlight and starlight came,  
And the Flower drank bliss from both.

Whatever was base and unclean,  
Whatever was sad and strange,  
Was piled around its roots ;  
It drew its strength from the same.

Whatever was formless and base  
Pass'd into fineness and form ;  
Whatever was lifeless and mean  
Grew into beautiful bloom.

Then I thought, 'O Flower of the World,  
 Miraculous Blossom of things,  
 Light as a faint wreath of snow  
 Thou tremblest to fall in the wind.

'O beautiful Flower of the World,  
 Fall not nor wither away ;  
 He is coming—He cannot be far—  
 The Lord of the Flow'rs and the Stars.

And I cried, 'O Spirit divine !  
 That walkest the Garden unseen,  
 Come hither, and bless, ere it dies,  
 The beautiful Flower of the World.'

Part VI. 'The Lifting of the Veil,' tells how in a dream Orm sees the Veil lifted, and the effect the revelation had upon the world. 'The Face was there: it stirred not, changed not, though the world stood still amazed ; but the eyes within it, like the eyes of a painted picture, met and followed the eyes of each that gazed.' At once the eyes of all the world are held in an hypnotic trance by the awful eye of the world ; all action ceases, and everywhere 'tis a piteous Sabbath :

Each soul an eyeball,  
 Each face a stare.

There is no bartering, no trafficking, only staring ; and of the faces some were glad, some pensive, and some mad—'twas everywhere a frozen pleasure and a frozen pain—and in his vision Orm seems to see the mortal race building covered cities to hide the Face ; the common sorrow, yearning, and love passed from the earth ; the heart of the world had no pulsation—'twas a piteous Sabbath everywhere.'

Part VII. comprises the 'Coruiskin Sonnets,'

in which for the first time the poet essays the Sonnet as a form of poetical expression. They are thirty-four in all, and the general 'motif' which underlies them is the Soul's direct expression to a silent, pitiless, lonely, beautiful God. The 'mise-en-scène' is Loch Coruisk, in the island of Skye, a woodless, barren, hill-topped waste of Celtic country—the very 'back of beyond' of tradition. The corry by the water, which in plain English is the name for this Western haunt of mists and shadows, was a fit place for the gathering of possible mystic forms, seeking to find in the eternal hills the silent and lonely God from whose breath springs the essences of natural growth. Fit place this for *Die Walkyrie*, for the ghostly visitations of *Walpurgisnacht*, the ideal sporting-ground of witches and water-kelpies, 'the blackest mountain-side,' to use Sir Walter Scott's words, in the island; 'black waves, bare crags, and banks of stone. I think,' writes Mr. Buchanan, 'this is the very stillest place on all God's earth.'

Ghostly and livid, robed with shadow, see !  
 Each mighty Mountain silent on its throne,  
 From foot to scalp one stretch of livid stone,  
 Without one gleam of grass or greenery.  
 Silent they take the immutable decree—  
 Darkness or sunlight come,—they do not stir ;  
 Each bare brow lifted desolately free,  
 Keepeth the silence of a death-chamber.  
 Silent they watch each other until-doom ;  
 They see each other's phantoms come and go,  
 Yet stir not. Now the stormy hour brings gloom,  
 Now all things grow confused and black below,  
 Specific through the cloudy Drift they loom,  
 And each accepts his individual woe.

. . . . .

Desolate ! How the Peaks of ashen gray,  
 The smoky Mists that drift from hill to hill,  
 The Waters dark, anticipate this day  
 That sullen desolation. Oh, how still  
 The shadows come and vanish, with no will !  
 How still the Waters watch the heaven's array !  
 How still the melancholy vapours stray,  
 Mirror'd below, and drifting on, fulfil  
 Thy mandate as they mingle !—Not a sound,  
 Save that deep murmur of a torrent near,  
 Deepening silence. Hush ! the dark profound  
 Groans, as some gray crag loosens and falls sheer  
 To the abyss. Wildly I look around,  
 O Spirit of the Human, art Thou *here* ?

Here in this rugged temple, the God whom the poet pictures is faced with invocation and prayer. Joining with the Jewish psalmist, he cries, 'The heavens declare the glory of God'; yet asks, 'What is all this glory to those who work and pray, who suffer and weep?' and prays for one warm touch from a Father who neither hears nor speaks. The immemorial Heavens bend sweet eyes down, but cold are 'they as clay.'

But I have found a voice, and I will pray.

The poet goes on to mourn that he has not found the Father by the starved widow's bed, nor in sick-rooms, nor in the bloody and bleared eyes of cities, where innocence cried with feeble voice, strangled in the grip of treachery and lust. The Home is fair, yet all is desolate, because the Father comes not ; the clouds of fate sodden above us ; like children in an empty home sit all, castaway children, lone and fatherless. The anguish and the suffering, the hopelessness conceived under the merciless hand of an inexorable environment,

drive the poet to utter words that seem to suggest a failing regard for the eternity of things :

When He returns, and finds the World so drear—  
All sleeping,—young and old, unfair and fair,  
Will he stoop down and whisper in each ear,  
'Awaken !' or for pity's sake forbear,—  
Saying, 'How shall I meet their frozen stare  
Of wonder, and their eyes so full of fear ?  
How shall I comfort them in their despair,  
If they cry out, "Too late ! let us sleep here" ?'  
Perchance He will not wake us up, but when  
He sees us look so happy in our rest,  
Will murmur, 'Poor dead women and dead men !  
Dire was their doom, and weary was their quest.  
Wherefore awake them unto life again ?  
Let them sleep on untroubled—it is best.'

And praying, he cries :

And wise, and gentle, oh come down, come down !  
Come like an Angel with a human face,  
Pass through the gates into the hungry Town,  
Comfort the weary, send the afflicted grace,  
Shine brighter on the Graves where we lay down  
Our dear ones, cheer them in the narrow place !

Carried away by the splendour of the world itself, the grandeur of the scene o'er which the God broods with loveless eye for humanity, the poet speaks :

Oh, Thou art beautiful ! and Thou dost bestow  
Thy beauty on this stillness—still as sheep  
The Hills lie under Thee ; the Waters deep  
Murmur for joy of Thee ; the voids below  
Mirror Thy strange fair Vapours as they flow.

The sonnets throughout contain many fine efforts at word-painting.

See ! onward swim  
The ghostly Mists, from silent land to land,  
From gulf to gulf ; now the whole air grows dim—  
Like living men, darkling a space, they stand.  
But lo ! a Sunbeam, like the Cherubim,  
Scatters them onward with a flaming brand.

O hoary Hills, though ye look aged, ye  
 Are but the children of a latter time—  
 Methinks I see ye in that hour sublime  
 When from the hissing cauldron of the Sea  
 Ye were upheaven, while so terribly  
 The Clouds boiled, and the Lightning scorched ye bare.  
 Wild, new-born, blind, Titans in agony,  
 Ye glared at heaven through folds of fiery hair! . . .  
 Then, in an instant, while ye trembled thus,  
 A Hand from heaven, white and luminous,  
 Pass'd o'er your brows, and hush'd your fiery breath.  
 Lo! one by one the still Stars gather'd round,  
 The great Deep glass'd itself, and with no sound  
 A cold Snow fell, and all was still as death.

O Rainbow, Rainbow, on the livid height,  
 Softening its ashen outlines into dream,  
 Dewy yet brilliant, delicately bright  
 As pink wild-roses' leaves, why dost thou gleam  
 So beckoningly? Whom dost thou invite  
 Still higher upward on the bitter quest?  
 What dost thou promise to the weary sight  
 In that strange region whence thou issuest?  
 Speakest thou of pensive runlets by whose side  
 Our dear ones wander sweet and gentle-eyed,  
 In the soft dawn of some diviner Day?  
 Art thou a promise? Come those hues and dyes  
 From heavenly Meads, near which thou dost arise,  
 Iris'd from Quiet Waters, far away!

The appeal to the inexorable Father, which is continued throughout the sonnets, is sometimes drowned in tears of helplessness, and sometimes roused to the pitch of fiery anger and remorse:

Oh, what have sickly Children done, to share  
 Thy cup of sorrows? yet their dull, sad pain  
 Makes the earth awful;

The Angels Thou hast sent to haunt the street  
 Are Hunger and Distortion and Decay.

Over and over again, the poet harps back to the helplessness of God. 'There is no death; powerless

**even God's right hand, full arm'd with fate, to  
slay the meanest thing beneath the sky.'**

Yet hear me, Mountains! echo me, O Sea!  
Murmur an answer, Winds, from out your caves;  
Cry loudly, Torrents, Mountains, Winds, and Waves—  
Hark to my crying all, and echo me—  
All things that live are deathless—I and ye.  
The Father could not slay us if He would;  
The Elements in all their multitude  
Will rise against their Master terribly,  
If but one hair upon a human head  
Should perish! . . . Darkness grows on crag and steep,  
A hollow thunder fills the torrent's bed;  
The wild Mists moan and threaten as they creep;  
And hush! now, when all other cries are fled,  
The warning murmur of the white-hair'd Deep.

**If love could only spring between Maker and man,  
if man could see that love worked, instead of law,  
all would be well with the poet.**

Here in the dark I grope, confused, purblind;  
I have not seen the glory and the peace;  
But on the darken'd mirror of the mind  
Strange glimmers fall, and shake me till they cease—  
Then, wondering, dazzled, on Thy name I call,  
And, like a child, reach empty hands and moan,  
And broken accents from my wild lips fall,  
And I implore Thee in this human tone;—  
If such as I can follow Him at all  
Into Thy presence, 'tis by love alone.

**Part VIII. 'The Coruisken Vision' is cast on the  
same stage, with a dramatis personæ of Orm, the  
Spirit of Sorrow, and a chorus of voices, built on  
the lines of the Greek tragedies. Here Orm, led  
by the Spirit of Sorrow,<sup>1</sup> is shown under the 'white  
smile of the ghostly Moon, an edifice that whirls  
on serpent columns heavenward, at whose gates**

<sup>1</sup> Satan. See 'The Devil's Case.'



sits a little Child, turning the dim leaves of a  
Prayer Book :

*With fingers light, as are a rose's leaves,  
And smiling on the things it sees therein.*

Here in this edifice sit the Kings of Thought in  
meditation, while Bael, the immortal Child at the  
door, who sat on Eve's shoulder, and is immortal  
because he has not eaten of the Tree of Sorrow,  
reads on. Here we find Menu, the son of Brahm,  
who grew so wise, they took him for a god ;  
Orpheus, who 'having swept each circle course  
divine' :

*Whirl'd like a moth around an altar lamp,  
A moment round that inmost flame of all,*

then fell to Lesbos, blind with light ; Socrates,  
who, tasting the bitterness of wisdom, smiled glori-  
ously, and so passed up to God, wise in his dying ;  
Diogenes :

*Who stole the wondrous fruit,  
And munched it in the mud, and scowled on all,  
Because it tasted sourly ;*

Plato, with great eyes dim with dream of all  
who ever lived and died :

*The one who loved the quest for its own sake  
Because it led him into paths so fair ;  
Married his days and nights to thought, and left  
Broods of angelic dreams attesting all,  
That by the unassisted mind of man  
Could be conceived of immortality,  
Saw Truth in open daylight, face to face,  
And would have loved and understood her too,  
Had he not thought knowledge so beautiful.*

David, king of Israel, 'with blue eyes looking  
down on the pale youth' swinging by hair of gold

to the black branches of a forest tree'—all these seeking the Eternal wisdom, striving to open the Book of the World which abideth under the waters. All

Search'd for the same from birth to the grave,  
And wearily westering perished !

while the little one at the gate points with hand to a passage in the book :

  ' Verily I say,  
Except a man be born again, he shall not  
Enter the kingdom of God.'

Then, while voices sing :

The smile of a little child  
Disturbs us where we sit  
On our thrones—the Wise and the Mighty.  
Never heretofore  
Have our thrones been shaken,  
Never heretofore  
Did we know and wonder !  
We are, and we are not, we know and we know not,  
We come and we go at thy bidding ;

the child kisses the Spirit of Sorrow and the Temple vanishes, and in a mist Orm seems to see the shadow of a cross—which the Spirit tells him is the shadow of his thought crossing the luminous silence of the stars. Bidding him farewell, Satan cries :

And when thou prayest, pray for me,  
Pray for the outcast Spirit ! Pray for all  
Strong Spirits that are outcast !

And falling on his knees, Orm prays :

  Father God,  
Forgive thy child ! behold him on his knee !  
Evil is Evil, Father, Good is Good,  
Darkness is dreadful, and the Light Divine.

'The Devil's Mystics' comprises Part IX, in which 'The Tree of Life' deals with the three gardeners, Regret, Hope and Memory, and the setting and feeding of the Seed by the world's smiles and tears bringing forth a blossom which the Angels named 'Spirit,' a flower which is to bear no seed, but is to be plucked by the Sun and worn till it withers in his hair.

The second of this series is 'The Seeds,' with its recurring lines :

till :

'Grow, Seed ! blossom, Brain !  
Deepen, deepen, into pain !'

When standing in the perfect light  
I saw the first-born Mortal rise—  
The flower of things he stood his height  
With melancholy eyes.  
'Grow, Seed ! blossom, Brain !  
Deepen, deepen, into pain !'

From all the rest he drew apart,  
And stood erect on the green sod,  
Holding his hand upon his heart,  
And looking up at God !  
'Grow, Seed ! blossom, Brain !  
Deepen, deepen, into pain !'

He stood so terrible, so dread,  
With right hand lifted pale and proud,  
God feared the thing He fashioned,  
And fled into a cloud.  
'Grow, Seed ! blossom, Brain !  
Deepen, deepen, into pain !'

And since that day He hid away  
Man hath not seen the Face that fled,  
And the wild question of that day  
Hath not been answered.  
'Grow, Seed ! blossom, Brain !  
Deepen, deepen, into pain !'

Following this are the poems of 'The Philo-

sophers,' the drinkers of hemlock, 'worn and old, who drink and dream, each with the sad forehead, each with the cup of gold'; and the 'Prayer from the Deep.' The series ends with two prayers, one a general invocation of pity for those who weep and weep, for those who have passed through the gate, and for those who wander free after the passing through, with a final note that the Son may help all those who go before the Father, and a second personal prayer of Orm the Celt.

In the time of transfiguration,  
Melt me, Master, like snow ;  
Melt me, dissolve me, inhale me  
Into Thy wool-white cloud ;  
With a warm wind blow me upward  
Over the hills and the seas,  
And upon a summer morning  
Poise me over the valley  
Of Thy mellow, mellow realm ;  
Then, for a wondrous moment,  
Watch me from infinite space  
With Thy round red Eyeball of sunlight,  
And melt and dissolve me downward  
In the beautiful silver Rain  
That drippeth musically,  
With a gleam like Starlight and Moonlight,  
On the footstool of Thy Throne.

'The Vision of the Man Accurst' is the fitting peroration of this splendid piece of spiritual eloquence. The rhetoric, which has seldom failed throughout the whole book, reaches its highest pitch in the stately diction of this remarkable poem. 'Thou shalt not cast away any man' serves as the text of the whole, which com-

mences with 'Judgment was over; all the world redeemed save one Man,' and ends with

'The Man is saved; let the Man enter in!'

It is the embodiment, the central fire, of all the poet's philosophy, of the one belief to which he has clung with a fierce tenacity. This man, 'the basest mortal born,' 'who had sinned all sins, whose soul was blackness and foul odour,' had in him, in the poet's view, the seeds of immortality like all children of the Godhead, and must be saved.

Like golden waves  
That break on a green island of the south,  
Amid the flash of many plumaged wings,  
Passed the fair days in Heaven. By the side  
Of quiet waters perfect Spirits walked,  
Low singing, in the star-dew, full of joy  
In their own thoughts, and pictures of those thoughts  
Flash'd into eyes that loved them; while beside them,  
After exceeding storm, the Waters of Life  
With soft sea-sound subside. Then God said,  
'Tis finished—all is well!' But as He spake  
A voice, from out the lonely Deep beneath,  
Mock'd!

Then to the Seraph at the Gate,  
Who looketh on the Deep with steadfast eyes  
For ever, God cried, 'What is he that mocks?'  
The Seraph answered, 'Tis the Man accurst!'  
And, with a voice of most exceeding peace,  
God ask'd, 'What doth the Man?'

The Seraph said:  
'Upon a desolate peak, with hoar-frost hung,  
Amid the steaming vapours of the Moon,  
He sitteth on a throne, and hideously  
Playeth at judgment; at his feet, with eyes  
Slimy and luminous, squats a monstrous Toad;  
Above his head pale phantoms of the Stars  
Fulfil cold ministrations of the Void,  
And in their dim and melancholy lustre

His shadow, and the shadow of the Toad  
Beneath him, linger. Sceptred, thron'd, and crown'd,  
The foul judgeth the foul, and sitting grim,  
Laughs !'

With a simple directness the poet proceeds to tell of the daring defiance which the foulest of mankind hurls at the Throne, and still

The Waters of Life,  
The living, spiritual Waters, broke,  
Fountain-like, up against the Master's Breast,  
Giving and taking blessing. Overhead  
Gather'd the shining legions of the Stars,  
Led by the ethereal Moon, with dewy eyes  
Of lustre : these have been baptized with fire,  
Their raiment is of molten diamond,  
And 'tis their office, as they circling move  
In their blue orbits, evermore to turn  
Their faces heavenward, drinking peace and strength  
From that great Flame which, in the core of Heaven,  
Like to the white heart of a violet burns;  
Diffusing rays and odour. Blessing all,  
God sought their beauteous orbits, and behold !  
The Eyes immerably glistening  
Were turned away from Heaven, and with sick stare,  
Like the blue gleam of salt dissolved in fire,  
They searched the Void, as human faces look  
On horror.

The Master is petitioned to send forth His fire to wither up 'the worm' who repenteth not but blasphemeth; but He answers, 'What I have made, a living Soul, cannot be unmade, but endures for ever,' and says, 'Call the Man!' and ere the man could fly, the wild wind in its circuit swept upon him, and like a straw whirled him and lifted him and cast him at the gate. The Lord asking what the man doeth, learns that he thirsts, and gives him water, having

partaken of which 'the Man, looking up out of his drooping hair, grinned mockery at the Giver.' Then saith the Lord, 'Doth the Man crave to enter in?' 'Not so; he says his Soul is filled with hate of Thee and of Thy ways he loathes pure pathways; and he spitteth hate on all Thy Children.' 'What doth he crave?'

'Neither Thy Heaven nor by Thy holy ways.  
He murmureth out he is content to dwell  
In the Cold Clime for ever, so Thou sendest  
A face to look upon, a heart that beats,  
A hand to touch—albeit like himself,  
Black, venomous, unblest, exiled, and base:  
Give him this thing, he will be very still,  
Nor trouble Thee again.'

The Lord mused.

Still,  
Scarce audible trembled the Waters of Life—  
Over all Heaven the Snow of the same Thought  
Which rose within the Spirit of the Lord  
Fell hushedly; the innumerable eyes  
Swam in a lustrous dream.

Then said the Lord:  
'In all the waste of worlds there dwelleth not  
Another like himself—behold he is  
The basest Mortal born. Yet 'tis not meet  
His cruel cry, however piteous,  
Should trouble my eternal Sabbath-day.  
Is there a Spirit here, a human thing,  
Will pass this day from the Gate Beautiful  
To share the exile of this Man accurst,—  
That he may cease the shrill pain of his cry,  
And I have peace?'

Hushedly, hushedly,  
Snow'd down the Thought Divine—the living Waters  
Murmured and darkened. But like mournful mist  
That hovers o'er an autumn pool, two Shapes,  
Beautiful, human, glided to the Gate  
And waited.

'What art thou?' in a stern voice  
 The Seraph said, with dreadful forefinger  
 Pointing to one. A gentle voice replied,  
 'I will go forth with him whom ye call curst!  
 He grew within my womb—my milk was white  
 Upon his lips. I will go forth with him!  
 And *thou*?' the Seraph said. The second Shape  
 Answered, 'I also will go forth with him;  
 I have kist his lips, I have lain upon his breast,  
 I bare him children, and I closed his eyes;  
 I will go forth with him!'

Then said the Lord:  
 'What Shapes are these who speak?' The Seraph answer'd,  
 The woman who bore him, and the wife he wed—  
 The one he slew in anger—the other he stript,  
 With ravenous claws, of raiment and of food.'  
 Then said the Lord, 'Doth the Man hear?' 'He hears,'  
 Answer'd the Seraph; 'like a wolf he lies,  
 Venomous, bloody, dark, a thing accurst,  
 And hearkeneth, with no sign!' Then said the Lord:  
 'Show them the Man,' and the pale Seraph cried,  
 'Behold!'

Hushedly, hushedly, hushedly,  
 In heaven fell the Snow of Thought Divine,  
 Gleaming upon the Waters of Life beneath,  
 And melting,—as with slow and lingering pace,  
 The Shapes stole forth into the windy cold,  
 And saw the thing that lay and throbbed and lived,  
 And stooped above him. Then one reach'd a hand  
 And touch'd him, and the fierce thing shrank and spat,  
 Hiding his face.

'Have they beheld the Man?'  
 The Lord said; and the Seraph answer'd 'Yea';  
 And the Lord said again, 'What doth the Man?'

'He lieth like a log in the wild blast,  
 And as he lieth, lo! one sitting takes  
 His head into her lap, and moans his name,  
 And smoothes his matted hair from off his brow,  
 And croons in a low voice a cradle-song;  
 And lo! the other kneeleth at his side,  
 Half-shrinking in the old habit of her fear,  
 Yet hungering with her eyes, and passionately  
 Kissing his bloody hands.'



Then said the Lord,  
'Will they go forth with him?' A voice replied,  
'He grew within my womb—my milk was white  
Upon his lips. I will go forth with him!'  
And a voice cried, 'I will go forth with him;  
I have kist his lips, I have lain upon his breast,  
I bare him children, and I closed his eyes;  
I will go forth with him!'

Still hushedly  
Snowed down the Thought Divine, the Waters of Life  
Flow'd softly, sadly; for an alien sound,  
A piteous human cry, a sob forlorn  
Thrill'd to the heart of Heaven.

The Man wept.

And in a voice of most exceeding peace  
The Lord said (while against the Breast Divine  
The Waters of Life leapt, gleaming, gladdening):  
'The Man is saved; let the Man enter in!'

## CHAPTER IV

### 'THE DRAMA OF KINGS'

Turning from the 'unsung city's streets,' and leaving for a space the eternal hills, the poet published in 1871, on the very morn almost after the curtain had fallen on the Franco-German struggle, his poetic play, 'The Drama of Kings.' It was, as the poet himself said, the first serious attempt ever made to treat great contemporary events in a dramatic form, and very realistically, yet with something of the massive grandeur of style characteristic of the great dramatists of Greece. 'In minor points of detail, the author is sanguine that it is not all Greek, nor in any sense archaic. The interest is epic rather than tragic; but what the leading character is to a tragedy, France is to "The Drama of Kings," a wonderful genius, guilty of many sins, terribly overtaken by misfortune, and attaining in the end perhaps to purification.' It is necessary to notice here the cautious use of the word 'perhaps,' as the light of recent events rather points to the historical accuracy of the doubt of any salvation coming to the Gaul, as expressed in the words put by

the dramatist into the mouth of the Prussian Chancellor :

On this side Time, there is no hope for France.

The whole drama deals with the struggle between Teuton and Celt, from the days of the First Napoleon to the fall of Paris. In this, as in the poet's other work, the one point of view adopted is, not that of the politician, the satirist, or the historian, 'but that of the realistic Mystic, who, seeking to penetrate deepest of all into the soul, and to represent the soul's best and finest mood, seizes that moment when the spiritual or emotional nature is most quickened by sorrow or self-sacrifice, by victory or by defeat. In good honest truth, the writer has had far greater difficulty in detecting the spiritual point in these great leaders than in the poor worms at their feet. The utterly personal moods of arbitrary power, the impossibility of self-abnegation for the sake of any other living creature, the frightful indifference to all ties, the diabolic supremacy of the intellect, make the first Emperor a figure more despairing to the Mystic than the coster-girl dying in childbed in a garret, or the defiant woman declaiming over the corpse of her deformed seducer. It is in this sense of the superlatively diabolic that has made the author, in the epilogue, attribute the performance of the three leading characters to Lucifer himself;—only, let it be understood, not to the irreclaimable and Mephistophelean type of utter evil, but to the Mystic's Devil, a spirit as difficult

to fathom individually, but clearly in the Divine service, working for good. Perhaps the supernatural machinery of Prelude and Epilude is a defect, like all allegory, but if it serves to keep before the reader the fact that the whole action of the drama is seen from the spiritual or divine auditorium, he will not regret its introduction, and in using it without perfect faith, he may plead the example of the greatest poetic sceptic of modern times. No one did fuller justice to mystic truths than the great positivist who wrote the first and second "Fausts."

As for the metrical combinations used in the choruses, most of them are quite new to English poetry.

The Drama of Evolution, as the poet calls it in his dedication to the Spirit of Auguste Comte, opens with a Prelude before the curtain, in which the Lord, the Archangels, Lucifer, and Celestial Spectators form the 'preludi personæ,' Lucifer informing us that he has selected the fairest and the sweetest-voiced cherubs to play the part of Chorus.

Following this is the Prologue spoken by Time, cloaked and hooded, leaning on a staff; Time snow'd upon by many winters, but faring westward still, and ever looking backward to the east. Upon his ears strike the cries of 'Liberty! Liberty!'

God knows and hears  
That one word and none other hath been cried  
By men from the beginning. I have heard  
The sound so long, I smile; but at the same

Kingdoms have fallen like o'er-ripen'd fruit,  
Realms wither'd, heaven rain'd blood and earth yawn'd graves,  
The seasons sicken'd changing their due course,  
The stars burnt blue for many awful nights,  
The corpse-lights of a world that lay as dead.

Upon the stage, he declares, will be presented two mighty nations gathering up their crests against each other, smiting dimly and darkly for the great Idea. 'Phantoms cloaked by time, struggling in the name of Liberty.'

**My name**

Is also Death; and I am deathless. I  
Am Time and most eternal. I am he,  
God's Usher, and my duty it is to lead  
The actors one by one upon the scene,  
And afterwards to guide them quietly  
Through that dark postern when their parts are played.  
They come and go, alas! but I abide,  
And I am weary of the garish stage.

The first part of the drama has for its title, 'Buonaparte, or France against the Teuton,' the speakers being Napoleon Buonaparte, Alexander I. of Russia, Jerome, King of Westphalia, Louisa, Queen of Prussia, the King of Saxony, Baron von Stein, Professor Jahn, the poet Arndt, and others, the time October 1808, during the great Congress of Powers, and the scene Erfurt, in the Duchy of Saxe-Coburg Gotha. A long and fierce storm of words are uttered, first by Stein, Arndt, and Jahn, all pouring out the agony of their souls at the bloodthirsty, tyrannical ambition of the Little Corporal of France; Stein asking in despair if all the ghosts of the Teutons are laid for evermore, if Karl and Fritz are

forgotten, everybody in Germany dumb, fetter'd,  
broke, miserable, dead ?

Are this man's functions supernatural,  
Divine above all life, all love, all law,  
That he should walk upon the waves of earth  
Casting his bloody shade as on a sea,  
And they should hush themselves around his feet  
Lightly as ripples on a summer pond ?  
Earth, water, air—the clouds, the waves, the winds,  
The stars in their pale courses,—day and night  
Forgetful of their natural equipoise,  
Shape their mysterious functions to his will ;  
Kings lick his feet like dogs ; he lifts his finger  
And epileptic in his chair the Pope  
Foams speechless at the mouth ;—body and soul  
Obey him as an impulse and a law ;—  
The eyes, the ears, the tongues, of all the world  
Are blown one way like all a forest's leaves  
To see, hear, and entreat him ;—by his smile  
The earth is brighten'd,—and 'tis straight fine weather !  
Let him but frown, all darkens, and the sun  
Uprises bloody as a vulture's crest !  
Like hawks obedient to the falconer  
The Kings of Europe wait, and at a sign  
Soar, while he sits and smiles, in fierce pursuit  
Of any wretched quarry he would slay ;  
But let him whistle, and with bloody beaks  
They turn, and preen their plumage, and are fed.  
Cry ? I will cry to God with all my soul !  
Can God keep calm, and look upon these things ?

Whilst a Chorus of Spirits sings of the rise and  
fall of kings :

After each reaping  
We see upcreeping  
Another master !  
Another chain !—

Stein and Jahn burst in with maledictions on  
the destroyers of liberty—Liberty now 'no more  
a living shape supremely fair, but a mere ghost,  
unpleasant to the thoughts of foolish kings at

bedtime'—and moan that every wind is tainted by this pestilence of France. The skeleton of Law tyrannises everywhere ; France is law, fate, and death, and

All men of noble birth must flock perforce  
To spend three months of every year at court,  
There to be taught to play this mad French tune  
Upon the one-string'd fiddle of despair.

Stein cries 'Courage!' and swears all this shall cease when a new Teuton soul is created; and picturing the greatness of Napoleon, declares 'the life of every man is a wave, and having risen its appointed height, it must descend, and then shall rise the Teuton, an Iris on the Death-cloud, springing out of the proud Imperial Austrian ruin, not a delusion and a patrician lie, a paste-board Crown and an unholy Sword, but a living man, lord of all, and then the heart of Europe will be watered by the Rhine.' In the meantime, this crowned Shape knocks like Death at every door, and enters every kingly chamber as sleep doth, bringing, instead of sleep, sleepless Despair and Fear.

And within the night's dark core where the sad Cross gleam'd  
before  
Sits the Shape that Kings adore, upon a Throne ;  
And the nations desolate crawl beneath and curse their fate,  
And the wind goes by and bites them to the bone.

We are next brought to face a scene in which Buonaparte and the Kings are the leading 'personæ'; Buonaparte being without the help of sullen Austria, who sits like some poor cudgel-player with cracked crown, scowling upon the

victor in the game, mending the tattered realm, and tonicking the sick stomach of the time. To them enters Louisa of Prussia, who on bended knee supplicates the 'firebrand of the Earth.' Her supplication failing, she thus pours forth the agony of her soul :

Pitiless ! pitiless ! pitiless ! pitiless !  
 'Earth's masters ?'—O thrice miserable Earth  
 If these are masters of thy continents !  
 Bodies without a heart ! tyrants whose thrones  
 Are based upon unutterable pain,  
 One on the frozen ice of the East's despair,  
 One on the bloody lava hard and black  
 Scatter'd by the volcano of the West !  
 What hope for the poor world if these join hands,  
 Murder with Avarice, Poison with the Sword,  
 Cunning with Hatred, Pride with Cruelty,  
 The heir of Despots with the Parvenu,  
 Moloch, whose cold and leaden eyeballs gloat  
 On old familiar woes deep as the grave,  
 With the quick soul of subtler Lucifer  
 Ever devising novel agonies !  
 O Spirit of God, who with mysterious breath  
 Dost fashion e'en the will of men-like fiends  
 And fiend-like men to obey thee and to work  
 Thy strange dim ends, thy doom, thy deep revenge,  
 Penetrate this day into very Hell,—  
 Into the heart of Earth that is as Hell,—  
 Work in the council-chamber, in the ears  
 Of these arch-tyrants whisper doubts and fears,  
 Disturb their privy-councils, let them mark  
 The viper on each other's smiling lips,  
 And while they seek to cheat humanity  
 And portion Europe's bleeding body in twain,  
 Let each outwit the other,—like two thieves  
 Fall at each other's throats,—fiery with greed  
 Strike in new hatred at each other's hearts,—  
 And struggle, to the laughter of the world,  
 Till one or both fall impotent and dead !

Here follows a dialogue between Stein and the Queen, in which the sorrow and agony of the time are reflected, and again the Chorus is heard



singing of the rise of Napoleon and the fall of Liberty. A scene of high passion between Napoleon and the Pope's Cardinal is to be noted, in which the Tyrant bursts forth :

Is the man mad,  
That he should howl in our imperial ear  
The flat old thunders that so long have turned  
The small-beer kingdoms sour with jeopardy ?

and warns the Cardinal of the danger to the Pope, whom he had set up, whose 'stale scarecrow of a creed he had propt up in the Vatican' :

Let him look to it,  
Or by St. Peter and his rusty Key,  
That turns so slowly in the lock of Heaven,  
This hand shall set the foolscap on his head  
And fix a scarecrow on the heights of Rome  
For all the world to point at passing by !

There is much dialectical abuse of the Romish Church in this scene, at whose end the Chorus sings of the glory of God, who is 'deep and still, subtle as Love, and sure of foot as Fate,' and conveys a warning note to those who stand paralysed under the tyranny of the Emperor :

God gave ye living wills for other aim,  
Voices for other sounds than moans of blame,  
Hands for more use than folding on the breast ;  
Daily the sun goes down into the west—  
How long shall it go down upon your shame ?

We are then plunged into the whirlpool of a Napoleonic soliloquy :

The cup is overflowing. Pour, pour yet,  
My Famulus—pour with free arm-sweep still,  
And when the wine is running o'er the brim,  
Sparkling with golden bubbles in the sun,  
I will stoop down and drink the full great draught

Of glory, and as did those heroes old  
 Drinking ambrosia in the happy isles,  
 Dilate at once to perfect demigod.  
 Meantime, I feast my eyes as the wine runs  
 And the cup fills. Fill up, my Famulus!  
 Pour out the precious juice of all the earth,  
 Pour with great arm-sweep, that the world may see.

O Famulus—O Spirit—O good Soul,  
 Come close to me and listen—curl thyself  
 Up in my breast—let us drink ecstasy  
 Together; for the charm thou taughtest me  
 Is working like slow poison in the veins  
 Of the great nations: each, a wild-beast tamed,  
 Looks mildly in mine eyes and from my hand  
 Eats gently.

Proceeding in the grandly heroic strain of an  
 egoist who is conscious of his power, he draws,  
 for his soul to gloat over, the turgid picture of his  
 blood-clouded horizon, and conceives, with diabolic  
 chuckle, the possibility of his becoming the Regent  
 of the World.

Shall this be so, O Spirit? Pour, O pour—  
 Yea, let me feast mine eyes upon the wine,  
 Albeit I drink not. See!—Napoleon,  
 Waif from the island in the southern sea,  
 Sun to whom all the Kings of the earth are stars,  
 Sword before which all earthly swords are straws,  
 Child of the Revolution, crown and head,  
 Heart, soul, arm, King, of all Humanity.

It shall be a world without priests or idols in dark  
 sacrifice, governed not by twenty thousand kings  
 of Lilliput—little kings which he has held like  
 insects in his hand while he inspected them—but  
 by the one conquering heaven or hell sent Buona-  
 parte. Yet he knows that the Spirit of mankind  
 continually moves on:

The mighty Spirit of mankind  
 Has stagger'd from the sick-bed to his feet,

G

And feebly totters, picking darken'd steps,  
 And while I lead him on scarce sees the sun,  
 But questions feebly 'whither?' Whither? Indeed  
 I am dumb, and all earth's voices are as dumb—  
 God is not dumber on His throne. In vain  
 I would peer forward, but the path is black.  
 Ay,—whither?

Before him he sees the grim Titan of Liberty, who may arise one bloody morning from his torpor, and bring down the roof of Empire on his head. Has he, he asks himself, 'been lulling the Titan with a lie'? Yes, he knows that the promise to lead him to the trysting-place where waits his constant love and most immortal bride—Peace—is a vague dream, and he sees how, when the awakening comes, he will be cast with the Titan's last fierce breath 'down through the gate into the pit of doom.'

Yet is this Titan old so weak of wit,  
 So senile-minded though so huge of frame,  
 So deaf to warning voices when they cry,  
 That, should no angel light from heaven and speak  
 The mad truth in his ear, he will proceed  
 Patiently as a lamb. He counteth not  
 The weary years; his eyes are shut indeed  
 With a half smile, to see the mystic face  
 Pictured upon his brain; only at times  
 He lifteth lids and gazeth wildly round,  
 Clutching at the cold hand of him that guides,  
 But with a whisper he is calm'd again,  
 Relapsing back into his gentle dream.  
 O he is patient, and he will await  
 Century after century in peace,  
 So that he hears sweet songs of her he seeks,  
 So that his guides do speak to him of her,  
 So that he thinks to clasp her in the end.

And as it must come, even to Napoleon, there sounds the footfall of the dread spectre itself.

O for a spell  
 Wherewith to cheat old Death, whose feet I hear  
 Afar off, for I hate the bony touch  
 Of hands that change the purple for the shroud !

The Chorus follows, and the curtain drops on the first part.

A Choric Interlude, in which the Titan Liberty is heard bewailing the perfidy of the Emperor, now meets our attention, the Interlude finally picturing for us the fall and death of the betrayer. The voice of Liberty sings :

All shall forget thee. Thou shalt hear the nations  
 Flocking with music, light and acclamations  
 To kiss his royal feet  
 Who sitteth in thy Seat,  
 Surrounded by the slaves of lofty stations.

A rock in the lone sea shall be thy pillow.  
 In the wide waste of grey wave and green billow,  
 The days shall rise and set  
 In silence, and forget  
 To sun thee,—a black shape beneath a willow

Watching the weary waters with heart bleeding ;  
 Or dreaming cheek upon thy hand ; or reading  
 The book upon thy knee ;  
 And ever as the sea  
 Moans, raising eyes to the still heaven, and pleading ;

Till like a wave worn out with silent breaking ;  
 Or like a wind blown weary ; thou, forsaking  
 Thy tenement of clay,  
 Shalt wear and waste away,  
 And grow a portion of the ever-waking

Tumult of cloud and sea. Feature by feature  
 Losing the likeness of the living creature,  
 Returning back thy form  
 To its elements of storm,  
 Thou shalt dissolve in the great wreck of Nature.

Part II. of the drama is 'Napoleon Fallen.' We are carried forward seventy-two years, to the year 1870, shortly after the surrender of Sedan; the scene being drawn at the Château of Wilhelms-höhe in Cassel. Our ears are first greeted by the Chorus:

Ah, to grow old, grow old,  
Upon a throne of gold—  
Ah, on a throne, so lone,  
To wear a crown;  
To watch the clouds, the air,  
Lest storm be breeding there—  
Pale, lest some blast may cast  
Thy glory down.

Hast thou a hard straw bed?  
Hast thou thy crust of bread?  
And hast thou quaff'd thy draught  
Of water clear?  
And canst thou dance and sing?—  
O blessedder than a King!  
O happy one whom none  
Doth hate or fear!

following which we are confronted with a dialogue between the third Napoleon and a Physician. The physical and mental condition of the Emperor is drawn for us in detail, 'not dying—only sick, as all are sick who feel the mortal prison-house too weak for the play of the soul.' His hatred of war, his hesitation, and his feebleness at the moment of resolve, are all presented. A chorus follows, in which is indicated the fatality of building too near the Sea of Life:

How for long intervals and vast  
Strange secrets hide from day,  
Till Nature's womb upheaves to cast  
The gather'd load away;  
How deep the very laws of life  
Deposit elements of strife.

O many a year in sun and shower  
 The quiet waters creep !—  
 But suddenly on some dark hour  
 Strange trouble shakes the deep :  
 Silent and monstrous thro’ the gloom  
 Rises the Tidal Wave for doom.

Then woe for all who, like this Man,  
 Have built so near the Sea,  
 For what avails the human plan  
 When the new force flows free ?  
 Over their bounds the waters stream,  
 And Empires crash and despots scream.

A Bishop enters on the scene and holds parley with the Emperor, and the agony is gradually piled by the news of the cataclysm which is sweeping on the broken-hearted monarch. Un-generous France, pitiless as a sated harlot is, when ruin overtaketh him whose hand hath loaded her with gems, France, like Delilah, now betrays her lord. Many-tongued, wild-hair’d, mad, with fiery eyes and naked crimson limbs, upriseth the old Spectre of the Red to stab unhappy France ; the Chorus singing the fall of Paris. The bravery of the Parisians, the fearlessness of death, the hatred of capitulation, the heroism of the women, and the whole terrible struggle of a wounded and fallen but not ignoble foe, are told in fiery, inspiring language.

And Napoleon soliloquises thus :

O those dark years  
 Of Empire ! He who tames the tiger, and lies  
 Pillow’d upon his neck in a lone cave,  
 Is safer. Who could sleep on such a bed ?  
 Mine eyes were ever dry of the pure dew  
 God scatters on the lids of happy men ;  
 Watching with fascinated gaze the orbs,  
 Ring within ring of blank and bestial light,

Where the wild fury slept : seeking all arts  
 To soothe the savage instinct in its throes  
 Of passionate unrest. One cold hand held  
 Sweet morsels for the furious thing to lap,  
 And with the other, held behind my back,  
 I clutch'd the secret steel : oft, lest its teeth  
 Should fasten on its master, cunningly  
 Turning its wrath against the shapes that moved  
 Outside its splendid lair ; until at last,  
 Let forth to the mad light of War, it sprang  
 Shrieking and sought to rend me. O thou beast !  
 Art thou so wild this day ? and dost thou thirst  
 To fix on thine imperial ruler's throat ?  
 Why, have I bidden thee 'down,' and thou hast crouch'd  
 Tamely as any hound ! Thou shalt crouch yet,  
 And bleed with shamefuller stripes !

And again :

O had I held the scourge in my right hand,  
 Tighten'd the yoke instead of loosening,  
 It had not been so ill with me as now !  
 But Pity found me with her sister Fear,  
 And lured me. He who sitteth on a throne  
 Should have no counsellors who come in tears ;  
 But rather that still voice within his brain,  
 Imperturbable as his own cold eyes  
 And viewless as his coldly flowing blood ;  
 Rather a heart as strong as the great heart  
 Driving the hot life through a lion's thews ;  
 Rather a will that moves to its desire  
 As steadfast as the silent-footed cloud.  
 What peevish humour did my mother mix  
 With that immortal ichor of our race  
 Which unpolluted fill'd mine uncle's veins ?  
 He lash'd the world's Kings to his triumph-car  
 And sat like marble while the fiery wheels  
 Dript blood beneath him : tho' the live earth shriek'd  
 Below him, he was calm, and like a god  
 Cold to the eloquence of human tears,  
 Cold to the quick, cold as the light of stars,  
 Cold as the hand of Death on the damp brow,  
 Cold as Death brooding on a battlefield  
 In the white after-dawn,—from west to east  
 Royal he moved as the red wintry sun.  
 He never flatter'd Folly at his feet ;

He never sought to syrup Infamy ;  
He, when the martyrs curst him, drew around him  
The purple of his glory and passed on  
Indifferently like Olympian Jove.

Yet, early or late, all fall.  
No fruit can hang for ever on the tree.  
Dally the tyrant and the martyr meet  
Naked at Death's door, with the fatal mark  
Both brows being branded. Doth the world then slay  
Only its anarchs ? Doth the lightning flash  
Smite Cæsar and spare Brutus ? Nay, by heaven !  
Rather the world keeps for its paracles  
Torture more subtle and more piteous doom  
Than it dispenses to its torturers.  
Tiberius, with his foot on the world's neck,  
Smileth his cruel smile and groweth grey,  
Half dead already with the weight of years  
Drinketh the death he is too frail to feel,  
While in his noon of life the Man Divine  
Hath died in anguish at Jerusalem.

Ah, old Theology, thou strikest home !  
'Evil *must* suffer—Good *ordains* to suffer'—  
Sayst thou ? Did He then quaff His cup of tears  
Freely, who might have dash'd it down, and ruled ?  
The world was ready with an earthly crown,  
And yet He wore it not. Ah, He was wise !  
Had He but sat upon a human throne,  
With all the kingdom's beggars at His feet,  
And all its coffers open at His side,  
He had died more shameful death, yea, He had fallen  
Even as the Cæsars. Rule the world with Love ?  
Tame savage human nature with a kiss ?  
Turn royal cheeks for the brute mob to smite ?  
He knew men better, and He drew aside,  
Ordain'd to do and suffer, not to reign.

After a Choric Interlude, in which the spirits  
call upon the Nations to cry ‘Hold, enough !’ to the  
Teuton who stands with his spiked heel on the  
neck of France, and in which Interlude The Perfect  
State is painted, the scene is shifted to the camp  
outside Paris, in which the Kaiser, the Chancellor,



and others play a leading part. A prolonged monologue of Bismarck is the leading force in this scene—a monologue in which is pictured the history of France and its conquest by the Teuton :

Let France walk forth in sackcloth, let her wrists  
Wear gyves ; set, too, a fool's-cap on her head,  
With 'Glory' for a label writ in blood ;  
Then let a trumpeter before her go,  
And let him sound, and between whiles aloud  
Read the long record of enormities,  
And ending each, strike sharply with the scourge  
On the bare shoulders of the penitent ;  
And let the little children of the earth  
Follow and point, while good wives raise their hands,  
And honest burghers nodding pipe in mouth,  
Standing at doors with broad good-humour'd stare,  
Mutter aloud, ' Thank God ! the world is free ! '

The hatred of the country of the Gaul, the Messalina of the nations, 'a thing of many lovers, luring all, constant to none, adulterous with all, constant to nothing but inconstancy,' is made apparent in every line of the Chancellor's harangue ; and in contrast to the bitterness of his hatred-stenched words, is heard the Chorus :

Blessed is the Light in his hand swinging,  
Waving bright white pinions like a dove ;  
Blessed is the Sword that he is bringing,  
Such as holy spirits wield above ;  
Such another brand arose in beauty  
O'er the Gate of Paradise up-springing.  
Mother, hearken—it is the Sword of Duty ;  
Mother, hearken—it is the Light of Love !

Awakening, in one strong hand, O mother,  
Take the shining weapon of the free,  
And the sweet Lamp grasping in the other,  
Lift it high that all the world may see.

Bought with bloody tears and bitterest sorrow,  
They are thine for ever, martyr-mother !  
Thou shalt wear them on some golden morrow,  
Dawn shall come, the storm of God shall flee.

And because thy queenly robe is riven,  
Thou shalt win a raiment star-enwrought—  
Under the new dawn and the blue heaven  
Thou shalt wear this raiment blood hath bought ;  
Further, since thy heart hath cast off weakness,  
For thy forehead shall a crown be given.  
Mother, hearken—it is the Robe of Meekness ;  
Mother, hearken—it is the Crown of Thought !

Bismarck, too, faces the thought of how quick  
events fly and how rapidly the God of to-day  
may lie in the dust to-morrow :

'Tis so easy  
To cast down Idols ! The tide so pitilessly  
Washes each name from the waste sands of time !  
'Twas yestermorn the Man of Mysteries fell—  
Whose turn comes next ?

There are many other scenes which it is impossible even to hint at here. The drama contains a whole system of political ethics, and a fairly complete dramatic and poetic representation of the various events of that time, when the hearts of nations were rent, and the hatred of nations blackened the face of Europe. Nowhere has the poet caught the spirit of battle better than in the description of the fighting round Paris, conveyed through the medium of the Chorus in variable metre. The movement in this part of the drama is irresistible, and, in more ways than one, this is the most essentially dramatic part of it, and approaches nearest to our conception of the choruses in the Greek

tragedies. Here are one or two passages which suggest the spirit of action and change as depicted by the Chorus :

Onward, still nearing  
 The eyes that flash on them ;  
 Onward unfearing,  
 Tho' the death-bolts crash on them,  
 Torn asunder  
 By lightning and thunder,  
 Though the black shells thicken  
 And rain red death on them,  
 Rent and stricken,  
 With Fire's fierce breath on them,  
 Still forward winning,  
 But ever thinning,  
 Onward they go,  
 Over dying and dead,  
 Leaving the snow  
 Not white but red.  
 And now like a torrent,  
 Furious, horrent,  
 From his lair in the dark  
 Springs the foe ; and hark !  
 Like the waters meeting  
 They gather and scream,  
 While drums are beating  
 And the death's-eyes gleam !—  
 Like trees of the forest  
 When the storm-wind is sorest,  
 Like waves of the ocean  
 They meet in wild motion,  
 They reel, they advance,  
 They gather—they stand ;  
 Their wild weapons glance,  
 They are scattered like sand.

. . . . .

The light is glowing  
 Around blood-red,  
 The winds are blowing,  
 And the clouds are snowing  
 On the heaps of dead.  
 The white snows cover them,  
 The swords flash over them,

Death waits each way for them,—  
 O bless them, pray for them !  
 They are mingled like water,  
 They are grappled in slaughter,  
 Face to face like wolves glaring,  
 With eyes fiercely staring,  
 Grappled and crying,  
 Rank within rank,  
 Dead, living, and dying,  
 Teuton and Frank :  
 Like a cloud struck by lightning  
 And rent into rain,  
 Darkening and brightening  
 They cover the plain.

And let us not omit this picture of France in  
 her downfall :

Who passeth there  
 Naked and bare,  
 A bloody sword upraising ?  
 Who with their moan  
 Glides past alone,  
 At the black heaven gazing ?  
 Limbs thin and stark,  
 Eyes sunken and dark,  
 The lightning round her leaping ?  
 What shape floats past  
 Upon the blast,  
 Crouching in pain and creeping ?  
 Behold ! her eyes to heaven are cast,  
 And they are red with weeping.

Say a prayer thrice  
 With lips of ice :  
 'Tis she—yea, and no other ;  
 Look not at me  
 So piteously,  
 O France—O martyr mother !  
 O whither now,  
 With branded brow  
 And bleeding heart, art flying ?  
 Whither away ?  
 O stand ! O stay !  
 Tho' winds, waves, clouds are crying—  
 Dawn cometh swift—'twill soon be day—  
 The Storm of God is dying.

She will not speak,  
 But, spent and weak,  
 Droops her proud head and goeth;  
 She! she crawls past,  
 Upon the blast,  
 Whither no mortal knoweth—  
 O'er fields of fight,  
 Where glimmer white  
 Death's steed and its gaunt rider—  
 Thro' storm and snow,  
 Behold her go,  
 With never a friend beside her—  
 O Shepherd of all winds that blow,  
 To Quiet Waters guide her!

There, for a space,  
 Let her sad face  
 Fall in a tranquil mirror—  
 There spirit-sore  
 May she count o'er  
 Her sin, her shame, her error,—  
 And read with eyes  
 Made sweet and wise  
 What her strong God hath taught her,  
 With face grown fair  
 And bosom bare  
 And hands made clean from slaughter—  
 O Shepherd, seek and find her there,  
 Beside some Quiet Water!

Amongst other scenes, the crowning of the Kaiser in the Hall of Mirrors as Emperor of a United Germany may be noted for the vigorous and picturesque Song of the Sword, and for the oration of the Kaiser on the future prosperity of his country and of the peace of Europe; the scene concluding with the voices of the Chorus singing:

O God who leadest on the mortal race,  
 Whither they know not, through the wondrous years,  
 Thou mystery whose sad meaning none may trace,  
 Light on our eyes and Music in our ears,  
 Spirit that punishest and scatterest grace,  
 Lord of all losses and all doubts and fears,

Shedding upon the self-same hour and place  
The doubt that maddens and the faith that cheers,—  
Is there ever a smile upon a living face  
That doth not mean some living face's tears?

The Epilogue is spoken by Time, who rehearses the actions of the play, and draws the moral :

'O foolish mortal race,' I hear ye cry,  
'Who will, yet will not learn, and live, and take  
Their birthright, and be free!' Ay, friends, indeed,  
Man is a scholar eager indeed to learn,  
But most forgetful having learn'd. His wits  
Go wandering, his vacant eyes are caught  
By foolish pictures and by idle gleams,  
Glibly he learns and instantly forgets.  
Again, again, and o'er and o'er again,  
He tries the same old lesson, utters it  
So loud and well that out of every star  
Angels look out with gleaming eyes and hope ;—  
But in a moment his bewildered brain  
Shuts like a lantern, and is dark as night.

And perorates thus :

Ay, but I weary. O I weary. Sleep  
Were better. Would the mighty play were o'er !  
Again and yet again the same old scenes,  
The same set speeches, the same blind despairs  
And miserable hopes, the same sick fear  
Of quitting the poor stage ; so that I lose  
All count of act and scene and speech, confuse  
Scenes present and scenes past, actors long still  
With actors flinching now their little hour.  
How like each other all the players speak  
Who play the tyrants ! how the kings and queens  
Each follow each like bees from out a hive !  
Still the old speeches, the old scenes, despite  
The surface-change of costume and the trick  
Of posture. Ay, I weary ! O to see  
The great black Curtain fall, the music cease,  
All darken, the House empty of its host  
Of strange intelligences who behold  
Our Drama, till the great Hand, creeping forth  
In silence, one by one puts out the lights.

The Epilude contains the following :

The Soul shall arise.  
Power and its vanity,  
Pride's black insanity,  
Lust and its revelry  
Shall with war's devilry  
Pass from humanity.  
The Soul shall arise.

The Soul shall arise.  
Sweetness and sanity,  
Slaying all vanity,  
Shall to love's holiness,  
Meekness and lowliness,  
Shepherd humanity.  
The Soul shall arise.

A drama of some four hundred and fifty pages is difficult to condense for the purpose before us, but perhaps some glimpse has been obtained of the 'motif' and general type of action of this play—not written, it need not be explained, for the purposes of the stage. In nearly every instance the various characters are made the mouthpiece of a fiery rhetoric, the tempering and the refining influences of the whole lying in the hands of the Chorus, which breathes the essence of the eternal law, in contrast to the dramatic representation of points of view by the various characters of the drama. As for its historical accuracy, it is difficult to judge, for the flight of less than thirty years seems to us to be insufficient for the assumption of the rôle of the estimating historian. It is only fair, however, to the poet to add that, in a note to the 'Songs of the Terrible Year,' republished in the collected edition of his poems, he says: 'The "Songs,"

inasmuch as they formed a portion of "The Drama of Kings," preceded by a long period the publication of Victor Hugo's series under the same admirable title. "The Drama of Kings" was written under a false conception, which no one discarded sooner than the author; but portions of it are preserved in the present collection, because, although written during the same feverish and evanescent excitement, they are the distinct lyrical products of the author's mind, and perfectly complete in themselves.'



## CHAPTER V

### **'ST. ABE AND HIS SEVEN WIVES,' 'WHITE ROSE AND RED,' WITH A NOTE ON CRITICISM**

The year 1873 will always have a unique place in the bibliographical history of Mr. Buchanan. It was in this year that he risked a fall with the Philistine, and succeeded even beyond his most ambitious hope. 'The Ishmael of Song' had the courage to publish the two volumes, 'St. Abe and his Seven Wives,' and 'White Rose and Red,' anonymously, with the result that he soon had his enemies in his net. With unanimous voice those who had scourged the poet before joined in the song of praise. 'Pest on Mr. Buchanan's dreaming! to oblivion with all such aspiring versifiers! here we have a poet indeed—here is altogether the true characteristic of genius!' and so on. The poet was a poet of patience. 'St. Abe' ran rapidly into four or five editions, and then the thunderbolt burst. The author of 'St. Abe' was Robert Buchanan, the Ishmael of Song, the out-cast Scotsman—he who sang of trulls and costermongers—'the Celtic madman'; and there was sadness over the land.

The present writer cannot go back to those

stirring days in the literary dovecots, but an inquiry into the reception which was accorded by the Press leaves him with the conclusion, that the poet reached his high-water mark of contemporary praise in the testimony which was accorded to him in his anonymous robes. From the facts associated with the publication and critical reception of these poems, and calling to mind the aspect of the critics before and at the time of their publication, and the recoil which took place when the secret was out, are we to infer that the golden era of criticism is but an ephemeron floating in dreamland?

There is a deadly want of the sense of humour in attacking criticism as a whole. Burke said something similar about charges against a whole nation, and an analogous remark has a general bearing. Criticism, we imagine, is no worse at present—it is probably a great deal better—than it was formerly. At any rate, the men and women who criticise have in general more culture, and considerably more special knowledge than we are wont to associate with the past. We are not speaking here of the greater lights, but of those who constitute the general personnel of criticism. It is the unevenness of the process which irritates, the disinterested insight of one critic, and the nebulous ignorance of another. To come into genuine emotional relation with any work, a critic must have sympathy; if he adds imagination to this, he becomes as much an artist as the man he attempts to criticise. But however sympathetic

a critic may be, he tends to drift towards academic methods—that is to say, he becomes, unconsciously it may be, a supporter of academies, for these exist in letters as well as in painting. These academies spring into existence through the ideals and methods set by a new writer with novel ideals of art finding a large following in the literary world, and are at first subjected to the same organised suppression, at the hands of the older academies, that in a later stage they extend to other new and revolutionary, and therefore healthy, movements in letters, which in their turn are by the grace of a number of enthusiastic, yet generally less intelligent disciples, converted into academies. As we have said in another place, ‘Criticism has a tendency to become the gospel of a sort of literary trades-unionism; all organisations have their conventions and their creeds, offence against the former being deemed in a sense more offensive than a disputation of the latter.’

But it is idle to deny that criticism may be viewed from a lower level than this, and in this instance let us repeat what we were called upon to say on another occasion:<sup>1</sup> ‘Though it be a mere belated platitude, it is true, nevertheless, that all criticism is futile which allows any unreasoned aversion to the personality or point of view of the author, or permits a prejudice against a former utterance, to interfere with the unprejudiced estimation of any literary effort. We must still be travelling far in the wilderness of despair, when

<sup>1</sup> ‘The Struggle for Success.’

an author finds it impossible to have his work presented fairly to the readers of literary criticism, owing, it may be, to the fact that the virility of his personality and the heaviness of his own critical artillery have caused offence in the critical doves, and when it is an open secret that there are men resplendent in the gilded uniforms of official criticism, who day by day lie in wait for possible opportunities to cast a slur on the literary reputations of those for whom they have a personal dislike.'

We are not attempting to preach Utopianism, nor do we fail to recognise the limitations of mere humanity. It takes a lot of dosing to cure human nature. This breaks out even in our prayers, and adds not a little to the colour and the interest of life. But this need not deter us from attempting to come a little nearer to critical salvation. In this instance we may recall an incident in the life of David Hackston of Rathillet, that might be used as a parable in any prospected literary bible. Hackston was one of the leaders, with Balfour of Burleigh, of the Covenanters at the battle of Drumclog, and is associated in history with the murder of Archbishop Sharp, but in this wise, that having beforehand had many private disagreements with Sharp, he refused to lay his hand upon him in case it might be said that the deed sprang from a personal and not a political dislike. 'Verb. sap.'

For many of the worst aspects of literary criticism the public has itself to blame. Reviews that attempt a serious estimate of an author's

work are voted dull and tasteless, and self-preservation being the first law as of yore, the result of such voting is evident. If the critic is not witty, satirical, or impertinent on recurring occasions, the public protests, with the result that some one, generally a new and sensitive author, must suffer—if not a new author, one that has been given a bad name, and who is not allowed even the benefit of a good hanging, but is put upon an everlasting rack for the benefit of the critic and the amusement of the public.

Critics are men in a world of men, not gods, and in the long-run are neither better nor worse than other men. They have generally more sense of humour, more sense of perspective, and although they have little gods of their own, they have a healthy distaste for universal idolatry. Accustomed to study many points of view, they are at least catholic, if not profound, and are often astoundingly generous. They, at least, keep us from fanaticism, and are keen to observe, when we parade our gorgeous robes, if there is a button loose.

But literary dressmaking may run to extremes, and so may the profession of literary housemaid. The long bamboo, with the feathered head, is useful enough occasionally, but to depend upon it exclusively is not to bring us to any better vision of what we are regarding. The housemaid in literature is curiously enough often a person of great culture, a person, in fact, of large historical knowledge, and may be a poet of distinction

and a classicist of fame; but history, poetry, philology will not boil the pot, and the profession of literary housemaid will at least secure for him (for as in University theatricals, the 'she' is a 'he') a most healthy-looking yearly income. Quick to discern spots in the sun and dust on the chariot-wheel—that is to say, printers' errors and grammatical slips—he is able by his adroitness, never-ending wit, and facility of grammar, to enlarge the spots and the dust to grievous literary sins; and the public, always ready to forgive a man if he be witty and avowedly clever, preserves for him the tenderest morsels and the chief place at the feast. We for our own part would not dismiss him for worlds, but we must remember that his natural base as housemaid is the pantry. When he has taken off his apron and changed his cloth, he may have a chair in the library.

With regard to criticism as applied to Mr. Buchanan, as we have hinted before, the blame rests not wholly with the poet's critics. Some time ago the present writer was expressing himself in language of a similar nature to the above, when a well-known London critic interrupted him with the remark that Mr. Buchanan was only being paid back with interest for the amount of criticism he had bestowed on an unwilling public. This, of course, gave the whole matter away, for there can surely be no justification for a professed critic to diminish the value of his own work by unfair methods of criticism,

because the man he is dealing with practises the art himself. We are not attempting to justify Mr. Buchanan's numerous and often highly flavoured and irrelevant literary utterances. They must be judged on the same footing as that which we have been bold enough to suggest as the proper basis of criticism. And it is as well to remember that Mr. Buchanan is not, after all, the inexorable person he is often made out. For one piece of early criticism the poet made a withdrawal and an apology that was both straightforward and noble. In the case of an old enemy he said: 'That I should ever have underrated the exquisite work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti is simply a proof of the incompetency of all criticism, however honest, which is conceived adversely, hastily, and from an unsympathetic point of view; but that I should have ranked myself for the time being with the Philistines, and encouraged them to resist an ennobling and refining literary influence, must remain to me a matter of permanent regret,' and in the same breath dedicates to the dead poet his greatest work of fiction, 'God and the Man.'

I would have snatch'd a bay leaf from thy brow,  
Wrongs the chaplet on an honoured head;  
In peace and tenderness I bring you now  
A lily-flower instead.

The first of the three volumes we have now to consider, 'St. Abe and his Seven Wives,' is a satire on the futility of Mormonism, the embodiment of the doctrines and politics of

the Latter Day Saints. The poem has been made the medium of expressing the poet's admirable sense of humour, a humour touched with that breath of tenderness which is seldom wanting in Mr. Buchanan's work. In this poem the poet has allowed himself the free use of the spirit of comedy in poetry. A critic who named James Russell Lowell as the possible author, gave it as his opinion that the substance of it was as strong as anything in the entire range of English satirical literature. It is dramatic, the humour is never forced, the local colouring is painted freely and with artistic success, the metres are eminently suited to the dramatic purposes of the work, and as for its effect on Mormonism itself, we can only quote what the 'Spectator' of that day said: 'We believe that this new book will paralyse Mormon resistance far more than any amount of speeches in Congress or messages from President Grant, by bringing home to the minds of the millions the ridiculous, diabolic side of the peculiar institution. The canto called "The Last Epistle of St. Abe to the Polygamist," with its humorous narrative of the way in which the Saint, sealed to seven wives, fell in love with one, and thenceforward could not abide the jealousy felt by the other six, will do more to weaken the last defence of Mormonism—that, after all, the women like it—than a whole realm of narratives about the discontent in Utah.'

It is not a poem that lends itself easily to



quotation, but we may take one or two passages more isolated than the rest which may suggest the spirit of the context.

The poem opens with the declamatory sorrow of Joe Wilson in having his fiancée spirited away by one of the Apostles—the Apostle Hiram Higginson. He is very wroth with all the world, and especially with women :

Women is women ! Thet 's their style—  
Talk *reason* to them and they 'll bile ;  
But baste 'em soft as any pigeon,  
With lies and rubbish and religion ;  
Don't talk of flesh and blood and feeling,  
But Holy Ghost and blessed healing ;  
Don't name things in too plain a way,  
Look a heap warmer than you say,  
Make 'em believe they 're serving true  
The Holy Spirit and not you,  
Prove all the world but you 's damnation,  
And call your kisses jest salvation ;  
Do this, and press 'em on the sly,  
You 're safe to win 'em. Jest you try !

He reproaches his Cissy as to her change of manner to him, and suspecting physical distress, has his interrogation smothered by the following :

It ain't my stomach, nor my head,  
It ain't my flesh, it ain't my skin,  
It 's holy *spirits* here within !

He discovers her secret, and vowing vengeance, the woman implores mercy :

'Spare him !' I cried, and gev a shout,  
'What 's this yer shine you air about—  
What cuss is this that I jest see  
With that big book upon your knee,  
Cuddling up close and making sham  
To read a heap of holy flam ?'

Her brothers have little sympathy with the

## 'ST. ABE AND HIS SEVEN WIVES' 121

Apostle, which fact is hinted in the following lines :

We've done our best, don't hev a doubt,  
To keep the old Apostle out :  
We've trained the dogs to seize and bite him,  
We've got up ghosts at night to fright him,  
Doctor'd his hoss and so upset him,  
Put tickle-grass in bed to fret him,  
Jalap'd his beer and snuffed his tea too,  
Gunpowder in his pipe put free too ;  
A dozen times we've well-nigh kill'd him,  
We've skeer'd him, shaken him, and spill'd him.

In the City of the Saints, whither we are led by the next canto, we have a dialogue between the Stranger and several of the Bishops. Here are some of Bishop Peter's views :

Stranger, I'm with you there, indeed :—it's been the best of nusses ;  
Polygamy is to our creed what meat and drink to us is.  
Destroy that notion any day, and all the rest is brittle,  
And Mormondom dies clean away like one in want of vittles.  
It's meat and drink, it's life, it's power ! to heaven its breath doth win us !  
It warms our vitals every hour ! it's Holy Ghost within us !  
Jest lay that notion on the shelf, and all life's springs are frozen !  
I've half-a-dozen wives myself, and wish I had a dozen !

We hear of St. Abe, who seems to have fallen in the estimation of his brother Bishops :

And yet how well I can recall the time when Abe was younger—  
Why not a chap among us all went for the notion stronger.  
When to the mother-country he was sent to wake the sinning,  
He shipp'd young lambs across the sea by *flocks*—he was so winning ;  
O but he had a lively style, describing saintly blisses !  
He made the spirit pant and smile, and seek seraphic kisses !  
How the bright raptures of the Saint fresh lustre seemed to borrow,  
While black and awful he did paint the one-wived sinner's sorrow !  
Each woman longed to be his bride, and by his side to slumber—  
'The more the blessedder !' he cried, still adding to the number.

We catch dramatic and picturesque glimpses of life in the Salt Lake City, and of the pleasures of unlimited domesticity. The calm resignation of the wives, a resignation evidently born of expediency, is pictured thus :

When in their midst serenely walks their Master and their Mentor,  
They're hush'd, as when the Prophet stalks down holy church's  
centre !

They touch his robe, they do not move, those blessed wives and  
mothers,

And, when on one he shineth love, no envy fills the others ;  
They know his perfect saintliness, and honour his affection—  
And, if they did object, I guess he'd settle that objection !

As for St. Abe's wives, we have here quite a subject for contrast :

#### BISHOP JOSS.

It ain't a passionate flat like Abe can manage things in *your* way !  
They teased that most eternal babe, till things were in a poor way.  
I used to watch his thorny bed, and bust my sides with laughter.  
*Once* give a female boss her head you'll never stop her after.  
It's one thing getting seal'd, and he was mighty fond of Sealing,  
He'd all the human heat, d'ye see, without the saintly feeling.  
His were the wildest set of girls that ever drove man silly,  
Each full of freaks and fal-de-lals, as frisky as a filly.  
One pull'd this way, and t' other that, and made his life a mockery,  
They'd all the feelings of a cat scampaging 'mong the crockery.

Bishop Joss had an aunt, Tabitha Brooks, a virgin under fifty. 'She warn't so much for pretty looks, but she was wise and thrifty' :

She'd seen the vanities of life, was good at 'counts and brewin'—  
Thinks I, 'Here's just the sort of Wife to save poor Abe from ruin.'

He bestows her on the unwilling St. Abe :

And round his neck she blushing hung, part holding, part caressing,  
And murmur'd with a faltering tongue, 'O Abe, I'll be a blessing.'

## **'ST. ABE AND HIS SEVEN WIVES' 123**

**Under the (at that time) six, St. Abe has a mournful career :**

**His house was peaceful as a church, all solemn, still, and saintly ;  
And yet he'd tremble at the porch, and look about him faintly ;  
And tho' the place was all his own, with hat in hand he'd enter,  
Like one thro' public buildings shown, soft treading down the  
centre ;**

**until the arrival of Jason Jones's child, and then,  
his soul opening to love for the first time, storms  
brew in the household, and St. Abe is unhappier  
than before.**

**There's vinegar in Abe's pale face enough to sour a barrel,  
Goes crawling up and down the place, neglecting his apparel,  
Seems to have lost all heart and soul, has fits of absence shocking—  
His home is like a rabbit's hole when weasels come a-knocking,  
And now and then, to put it plain, while falling daily sicker,  
I think he tries to float his pain by copious goes of liquor.**

**The next canto finds the metre varied, and in  
it we have drawn with characteristic touch a  
picture of the individual character of St. Abe's  
household, and of the combined enmity that the  
six showed to the newly installed wife. Follow-  
ing this is a canto which gives us a view of the  
political and physical geography of Utah, with a  
glimpse, as we pass, of the Red-skin in his drunken  
degeneracy, and Jonathan's attitude towards him.**

**Poor devil of the plains, now spent and frail,  
Hovering wildly on the fatal trail,  
Pass on !—there lies thy way and thine abode,  
Get out of Jonathan thy master's road.  
Where ? anywhere !—he's not particular where,  
So that you clear the road, he does not care ;  
Off, quick ! clear out ! ay, drink your fill and die ;  
And, since the Earth rejects you, try the Sky !  
And see if He, who sent your white-faced brother  
To hound and drive you from this world you bother,  
Can find a corner for you in another !**

The sermonising of the prophet Brigham in the synagogue, with which the poem is next concerned, like the following two cantos, defies judicious extraction. The sermon is punctuated by Feminine Whispers, like a subdued chorus in the Greek tragedies. For example :

#### THE PROPHET.

Sisters and brothers who love the right,  
 Saints whose hearts are divinely beating,  
 Children rejoicing in the light,  
 I reckon this is a pleasant meeting.  
 Where's the face with a look of grief?—  
 Jehovah's with us and leads the battle;  
 We've had a harvest beyond belief,  
 And the signs of fever have left the cattle;  
 All still blesses the holy life  
 Here in the land of milk and honey.

#### FEMININE WHISPERS.

Brother Shuttleworth's seventeenth wife, . . .  
 Her with the heer brushed up so funny!

#### THE PROPHET.

Out of Egypt hither we flew,  
 Through the desert and rocky places;  
 The people murmur'd, and all look'd blue,  
 The bones of the martyr'd filled our traces.  
 Mountain and valley we crawl'd along,  
 And every morning our hearts beat quicker.  
 Our flesh was weak, but our souls were strong,  
 And we'd managed to carry some kegs of liquor.  
 At last we halted on yonder height,  
 Just as the sun in the west was blinking.

#### FEMININE WHISPERS.

Isn't Judge Hawkins's last a fright? . . .  
 I'm suttin that Brother Abe's been drinking!

#### THE PROPHET.

That night, my lambs, in a wondrous dream,  
 I saw the gushing of many fountains;  
 Soon as the morning began to beam,  
 Down we went from yonder mountains,

Found the water just where I thought,  
Fresh and good, though a trifle gritty,  
Pitch'd our tents in the plain, and wrought  
The site and plan of the Holy City.  
'Pioneers of the blest,' I cried,  
'Dig, and the Lord will bless each spadeful.'

**FEMININE WHISPERS.**

Brigham's sealed to another Bride . . .  
How worn he's gittin'! he's aging dreadful.

**THE PROPHET.**

But I hear some awakening spirit cry,  
'Labour is labour, and all men know it;  
But what is pleasure?' and I reply,  
Grace abounding, and wives to show it.  
Holy is he beyond compare  
Who tills his acres, and takes his blessing,  
Who sees around him everywhere  
Sisters soothing, and babes caressing,  
And his delight is Heaven's as well,  
For swells he not the ranks of the chosen?

**FEMININE WHISPERS.**

Martha is growing a handsome gel. . . .  
Three at a birth?—that makes the dozen.

The finest sight is a man of worth,  
Never tired of increasing his quiver.  
He sits in the light of perfect grace  
With a dozen cradles going together!

**FEMININE WHISPERS.**

The babby's growing black in the face!  
Carry him out—it's the heat of the weather!

The falling of the thunderbolt—in other words,  
the elopement of St. Abe with his own wife—is  
dramatically conveyed to us in the assembly of the  
Prophet and his Elders:

And the lesser lights all holy,  
Round the Prophet turning slowly,

Raised their reverend heads and hoary,  
Thinking, 'To the Prophet, glory!  
Hallelujah, veneration!  
Reckon that he licks creation!'

In the midst of their meditations comes a  
murmur and a tumult, and a voice, 'Brother Abe's  
skedaddled!' followed by the entry of

Six sad female figures moaning,  
Trembling, weeping, and intoning,  
'We are widows broken-hearted—  
Abraham Clewson has departed!'

While the Saints again upleaping  
Joined their voices to the weeping,  
For a moment the great Prophet  
Trembled, and look'd dark as Tophet.  
But the cloud pass'd over lightly.  
'Cease!' he cried, but sniffed alighty,  
'Cease this murmur and be quiet—  
Dead men won't awake with riot.  
'Tis indeed a loss stupendous—  
When will Heaven his equal send us?  
Speak, then, of our brother cherish'd,  
Was it *fit*s by which he perish'd?  
Or did Death come even quicker,  
Thro' a bolting horse or kicker?'

At the Prophet's question scowling,  
All the Wives stood moaning, howling,  
Crying wildly in a fever,  
'Oh the villain! the deceiver!'  
But the oldest stepping boldly,  
Curtsying to the Session coldly,  
Cried in voice like cracking thunder,  
'Prophet, don't you make a blunder!  
Abraham Clewson isn't dying—  
Hasn't died, as you're implying;  
No! he's not the man, my brothers,  
To die decently like others!  
Worse! he's from your cause revolted—  
Run away! skedaddled! bolted!

After this 'crusher truly' come meditation and

prayer, and the reading of the Last Epistle of St. Abe to the Polygamists, beginning :

O Brother, Prophet of the Light !—don't let my state distress you,  
While from the depths of darkest night I cry, 'Farewell! God  
bless you !'

I don't deserve a parting tear, nor even a malediction,  
Too weak to fill a saintly sphere, I yield to my affliction ;  
Down like a cataract I shoot into the depths below you ;  
While you stand wondering and mute, my last adieu I throw you ;  
Commending to your blessed care my well-beloved spouses,  
My debts (there's plenty and to spare to pay them), lands, and  
houses,

My sheep, my cattle, farm and fold, yea, all by which I've thriven :  
These to be at the auction sold, and to my widows given.  
Bless them ! to prize them at their worth was far beyond my merit,  
Just make them think me in the earth, a poor departed spirit.  
I couldn't bear to say good-bye, and see their tears up-starting ;  
I thought it best to pack and fly without the pain of parting !

In a serio-comic monologue the Saint tells of his fall from glory, and of the discovery of the essential monogamy of his nature ; how he grew to be fond of each wife individually instead of loving them in a body with a vague altruism :

Each got to think me, don't you see,—so foolish was the  
feeling,—

Her own especial property, which all the rest were stealing !  
O listen to the tale of dread, thou Light that shines so brightly—  
Virtue's a horse that drops down dead if overloaded slightly !  
She's all the *will*, she wants to go, she'd carry every tittle ;  
But when you see her flag and blow, just ease her of a little !  
*One* wife for me was near enough, *two* might have fixed me neatly,  
*Three* made me shake, *four* made me puff, *five* settled me completely,—

But when the *sixth* came, though I still was glad and never  
grumbled,  
I took the staggers, kick'd, went ill, and in the traces tumbled !

Instead of keeping well apart the Flesh and Spirit, brother,  
And making one with cunning art the nigger of the other,



They muddle and confuse the two, they mix, and twist and  
 mingle,  
 So that it takes a cunning view to make out either single.  
 The Soul gets mingled with the Flesh beyond all separation,  
 The Body holds it in a mesh of animal sensation.

The epistle contains much 'common' wisdom on the treatment of women, and on the limitations of human endeavour in the teeth of unlimited female emotions, jealousies, and fears.

To a woman's arms don't fall, as if you meant to *stay* there,  
*Just come as if you'd made a call, and idly found your way there ;*  
 Don't praise her too much to her face, but keep her calm and  
 quiet,—  
 Most female illnesses take place thro' far too warm a diet ;  
 Unto her give your fleshy kiss, calm, kind, and patronising,  
 Then—soar to your own sphere of bliss, before her heart gets  
 rising !  
 Don't fail to let her see full clear, how in your saintly station  
 The Flesh is but your nigger here obeying your dictation ;  
 And tho' the Flesh be e'er so warm, your Soul the weakness  
 smothers  
 Of loving any female form much better than the others !

St. Abe divides the world into Saints so 'high in bliss that they the Flesh can smother, and Souls inferior,' and concludes with the eruption that rose on the annexation of the maidenly No. 7.

But when the pretty smiling face came blossoming and blooming,  
 Like sunshine in a shady place the fam'ly Vault illuming,  
 It naturally made them grim to see its sunny colour,  
 While like a row of tapers dim by daylight, they grew duller.

And summing up the discovery of his love, his doubts, his determination, and his flight, he says :

Such as I am, she takes me, though ; and after years of trying,  
 From Eden hand in hand we go, like our first parents flying ;  
 And like the bright sword that did chase the first of sires and  
 mothers,  
 Shines dear Tabitha's flaming face, surrounded by the others :

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Shining it threatens there on high, above the gates of Heaven,  
And faster at the sight we fly, in naked shame, forth-driven.  
Nothing of all my worldly store I take, 'twould be improper,  
I go a pilgrim, strong and poor, without a single copper.  
Unto my Widows I outreach my property completely.  
There's modest competence for each, if it is managed neatly.  
That, Brother, is a labour left to your sagacious keeping ;—  
Comfort them, comfort the bereft ! I'm good as dead and  
sleeping !;

A fallen star, a shooting light, a portent and an omen,  
A moment passing on the sight, thereafter seen by no men !  
I go, with backward-looking face, and spirit rent asunder.  
O may you prosper in your place, for you're a shining wonder !  
So strong, so sweet, so mild, so good !—by Heaven's dispensation,

Made Husband to a *multitude* and Father to a *nation* !  
May all the saintly life ensures increase and make you stronger !  
Humbly and penitently yours,

A. CLEWSON (*Saint no longer*).

The poem ends with a canto in a varied metre, telling of St. Abe's monogamous life on the 'Farm in the Valley,' in which we see St. Abe at rest at last after the 'Sturm und Drang' of his extensively matrimonialised existence, and in those peaceful surroundings we learn of the comfortable disposal of his deserted wives in other matrimonial circles ; Tabitha, the grey mare of budding sixty, ending her career in the condition of Free Love.

Of other qualities of the poem, the descriptions of scenery, always a strong arm of Mr. Buchanan's work, are distinguished and accurate. It is indeed difficult to discriminate our appreciation between the dramatist and the stage-carpenter. The poem is dedicated 'To Old Dan Chaucer,' whom he greets thus :

Honest Chaucer, thee I greet  
In a verse with blithesome feet,  
And, tho' modern bards may stare,  
Crack a passing joke with Care !

Take a merry song and true  
 Fraught with inner meanings too !  
 Goodman Dull may croak and scowl :—  
 Leave him hooting to the owl !  
 Tight-laced Prudery may turn  
 Angry back with eyes that burn,  
 Reading on from page to page  
 Scrofulous novels of the age !  
 Fools may frown and humbugs rail,  
 Not for them I tell the Tale ;  
 Not for them, but souls like thee,  
 Wise old English JOLLITY !

In the same year was published 'White Rose and Red,' a love-story, by the author of 'St. Abe.' Although still in the New World, the poet, in this volume, deals with an entirely different aspect of affairs from that which held his attention in 'St. Abe.' We spring at once from the sprightliness of Comedy to the dignity of Tragedy. Comedy there is too, for the two spirits run hand in hand, occasionally losing each other, as when Tragedy soars at white heat to the gateway of the gods, leaving Comedy with blinking eyes gazing upward ; or when, Comedy springing forward with irresponsible joy, 'humanely malign,' Tragedy seeks the solitude of its own despair.

The contrasts of the poem are drawn on two distinct backgrounds, those of an Indian village and a lowland town. First :

the Land, where the lily-flower  
 Burgeons the trapper's forest bower,  
 Where o'er his head the acacia sweet  
 Shaketh her scented locks in the heat,  
 Where the hang-bird swings to a blossoming-cloud,  
 And the bobolink sings merry and loud ?

. . . . .

the Land where the golden Day  
Flowers into glory and glows away,  
While the night springs up, as an Indian girl  
Clad in purple and hung with pearl !  
And the white Moon's heaven rolls apart,  
Like a bell-shaped flower with a golden heart,—

and second, the village of Drowsietown :

O so drowsy ! In a daze  
Sweating 'mid the golden haze,  
With its smithy like an eye  
Glaring bloodshot at the sky,  
And its one white row of street  
Carpeted so green and sweet,  
And the loungers smoking still  
Over gate and window-sill ;  
Nothing coming, nothing going,  
Locusts grating, one cock crowing,  
Few things moving up or down,  
All things drowsy—Drowsietown !

The story tells of how one, Eureka Hart,  
belonging to a body of

Thrifty men, devout believers,  
Of the tribe of human *beavers* ;  
Life to them, with years increasing,  
Was an instinct never-ceasing  
To build dwellings multifarious  
In the fashion called gregarious,  
To be honest in their station,  
And increase the population  
Of the *beavers* !

while out hunting in the far north, is surprised  
and captured by a bevy of Indian squaws and  
maidens, and how, carried a prisoner to their  
village, he is received with courtesy by the tribe.  
He prolongs his stay there, and one of the maidens  
conceives a passion for him. From a long dream  
of sensuous delight, he wakes to a morning of  
grey ennui ; and, leaving a broken-hearted love

behind, he returns to Drowsietown. We are told how, under the influence of his environment, he becomes accustomed to, and embraces the ease of, civilisation, and is married to a girl of the town. After months of waiting, the neglected Indian girl sets out on a long journey south, with as guide only a scrap of paper on which Eureka's name and address is written. She passes through the great snowstorm, and arrives, collapsed and stricken with illness, at Eureka Cottage; the whole poem concluding with a picture of her death in the midst of the shadow, in which the intensity and unselfishness of her passion for Eureka is shown.

Nowhere has the poet attempted so much word-painting to further our impression of the grandeur and warmth of scenery than in the Indian part of this love-story. And, besides individual passages concerned with descriptions of scenery, the poet has been able to endow the atmosphere of the whole poem with a warmth, a perfume, and a movement, that seem to suggest an Indian summer. From an artistic point of view, the poet has therefore accomplished nothing short of a triumph.

As for the characters in the story, Eureka Hart is—well, intellectually—nothing.

Further in his soul receding,  
Certain signs of beaver-breeding  
Kept his homely wits in see-saw ;  
Part was Jacob, part was Esau ;  
No revolter ; a believer  
In the dull creed of the beaver ;

Strictly moral ; seeing beauty  
In the ploughshare line of duty :  
Loving nature as beasts love it,  
Eating, drinking, tasting of it,  
With no wild poetic gleaming,  
Seldom shaping, never dreaming ;  
Beaver with a wandering craze,  
Walked Eureka in God's ways.

He was neither brilliant, bright, frantic, nor romantic, but he had in his veins a nomad desire to be ever wandering, racing, ‘bird-like, wave-like, chased or chasing.’ His soul only became a living force worthy of the consideration of a poet, under the influence of the Indian maiden.

She was a shapely creature, tall,  
And slightly form'd, but plump withal,—  
Shapely as deer are—finely fair  
As creatures nourish'd by warm air,  
And luscious fruits that interfuse  
Something of their own glorious hues,  
And the rich odour that perfumes them,  
Into the body that consumes them.  
She had drunk richness thro' and thro'  
As the great flowers drink light and dew ;  
And she had caught from wandering streams  
Their restless motion ; and strange gleams  
From snakes and flowers that glow'd around  
Had stolen into her blood, and found  
Warmth, peace, and silence ; and, in brief,  
Her looks were bright, beyond belief  
Of those who meet in the green ways  
The rum-wreck'd squaws of later days.

And as for her costume :

All the merit of her dress,  
Was that they form'd for eyes to see  
Nimbus enough of drapery  
And ornament, just to suggest  
The costume that became her best—  
Her own brave beauty. She just wore  
Enough for modesty—no more.  
She was not, as white beauties seem,

Smother'd, like strawberries in cream,  
 With folds of silk and linen. No !  
 The Indians wrap their babies so,  
 And we our women ; who, alas !  
 Waddle about upon the grass,  
 Distorted, shapeless, smother'd, choking,  
 Hideous, and horribly provoking,  
 Because we long, without offence,  
 To tear the mummy-wrappings thence,  
 And show the human form enchanting  
 That 'neath the fatal folds is panting !

For the details of the love-story, what new is  
 there to record of love ?—

As it was in the beginning,  
 Is, and ever shall be !  
 Loving, and love for the winning,  
 Love and the soul set free.

(An invocation like this is  
 Need not be over-wise ;  
 Who shall interpret kisses ?  
 What is the language of eyes ?)

. . . . .  
 Lips, and lips to kiss them ;  
 Eyes, and eyes to behold ;  
 Hands, and hands to press them ;  
 Arms, and arms to enfold.

. . . . .  
 The love that waits for the winning,  
 The love that ever is free,  
 That was in the world's beginning,  
 Is, and ever shall be !

As the story indicates, there are two Nuptial  
 Songs—the one, the song of the children of Nature ;  
 the other, the song of the children of Drowsie-  
 town. Here is the first :

Where were they wedded ? In no Temple of ice  
 Built up by human fingers ;  
 The floor was strewn with flowers of fair device,  
 The wood-birds were the singers.

Who was the Priest? The priest was the still Soul,  
Calm, gentle, and low-spoken;  
He read a running brooklet like a scroll,  
And trembled at the token.

What was the service? 'Twas the service read  
When Adam's faith was plighted;  
The tongue was silent, but the lips rose-red  
In silence were united.

Who saw it done? The million starry eyes  
Of one ecstatic Heaven.  
Who shared the joy? The flowers, the trees, the skies  
Thrill'd as each kiss was given.

Who was the Bride? A spirit strong and true,  
Beauteous to human seeing,—  
Soft elements of flesh, air, fire, and dew,  
Blent in one Rose of being.

What was her consecration? Innocence!  
Pure as the wood-doves round her,  
Nothing she knew of rites—the strength intense  
Of God and Nature found her.

**And for contrast we hear the second:**

Where were they wedded? In the holy house  
Built up by busy fingers.  
All Drowsietown was quiet as a mouse  
To hear the village singers.

Who was the Priest? 'Twas Parson Pendon, dress'd  
In surplice to the knuckles,  
Wig powder'd, snowy cambric on his breast,  
Silk stockings, pumps, and buckles.

What was the service? 'Twas the solemn, stale,  
Old-fashioned, English measure:  
'Wilt thou this woman take? and thou this male?'  
'I will'—'I will'—with pleasure.

Who saw it done? The countless rustic eyes  
Of folk around them thronging.  
Who shared the joy? The matrons with soft sighs,  
The girls with bright looks longing.



Who was the Bride? Sweet Phoebe, dress'd in clothes  
 As white as she who wore 'em,  
 Sweet-scented, self-possess'd,—one bright White Rose  
 Of virtue and decorum.

Her consecration? Peaceful self-control,  
 And modest circumspection—  
 The sweet old service softening her soul  
 To formalised affection.

Surveying with calm eyes the long, straight road  
 Of matrimonial being,  
 She wore her wedding clothes, trusting in God,  
 Domestic, and far-seeing.

With steady little hand she sign'd her name,  
 Nor trembled at the venture.  
 What did the Bridegroom? Blush'd with sheepish shame,  
 Endorsing the indenture.

It is not in our power to quote the many passages  
 of beauty which the poem contains, but the  
 following will indicate some of its moods :

The swift is wheeling and gleaming,  
 The brook is brown in its bed,  
 Rain from the cloud is streaming,  
 And the Bow bends overhead.  
 The charm of the winter is broken ! the last of the spell is said !

The eel in the pond is quick'ning,  
 The grayling leaps in the stream—  
 What if the clouds are thick'ning?  
 See how the meadows gleam !  
 The spell of the winter is shaken ; the world awakes from a dream !

The fir puts out green fingers,  
 The pear-tree softly blows,  
 The rose in her dark bower fingers,  
 But her curtains will soon unclose,  
 The lilac will shake her ringlets over the blush of the rose.

The swift is wheeling and gleaming,  
 The woods are beginning to ring,  
 Rain from the cloud is streaming ;—  
 There, where the Bow doth cling,  
 Summer is smiling afar off, over the shoulder of Spring !

Phœbe, the wife,

In her very style of looking  
There was cognisance of cooking !  
From her very dress were peeping  
Indications of housekeeping !

And if the poem contained nothing else, the description of The Great Snow would entitle it to a very high place amongst poems of Nature. From the first breath of the east wind till the time came when not a bird stayed, nor a team could stir, there is detailed all the various changes of the storm, leading up to the grand climax. The falling flakes come first, the vanguard of the Snow ; then 'faint of breath and thin of limb, Hoar-Frost, like a maiden's ghost, nightly o'er the marshes crost in the moonlight.' Then comes the Phantom Fog, sitting sullen in the swamp, 'scowling with a blood-shot eye, till the North Wind, with a shout, thrust his pole and poked him out,' and then the main Army of the Snow :

Black as Erebus afar,  
Blotting sun, and moon, and star,  
Drifting, in confusion driven,  
Screaming, straggling, rent and riven,  
Whirling, wailing, blown afar  
In an awful wind of War,  
Dragging drifts of death beneath,  
With a melancholy groan,  
While the fierce Frost set his teeth,  
Rose erect, and waved them on !

Multitudinous and vast,  
Legions after legions passed.  
Still the air behind was drear  
With new legions coming near ;  
Still they waver'd, wander'd on,  
Glimmer'd, trembled, and were gone.

While the drift grew deeper, deeper,  
On the roofs and at the doors,  
While the wind awoke each sleeper  
With its melancholy roars.  
Once the Moon looked out, and lo  
Blind against her face the Snow  
Like a wild white grave-cloth lay,  
Till she shuddering crept away.  
Then thro' darkness like the grave,  
On and on the legions drave.

### At the melting of the snow :

Underneath her death-shroud thick  
Like a body buried quick,  
Heaved the Earth, and thrusting hands  
Crack'd the ice and brake her bands.  
Heaven, with face of watery woe,  
Watched the resurrection grow.  
All the night, bent to be free,  
In a sickening agony,  
Struggled Earth. With silent tread  
From his cold seat at her head  
Rose the Frost, and northward sto  
To his cavern near the pole.  
When the bloodshot eyes of Morn  
Opened in the east forlorn,  
'Twas a dreary sight to see  
Blotted waste and watery lea,  
All the beautiful white plains  
Blurr'd with black'ning seams and stains,  
All the sides of every hill  
Scarr'd with thaw and dripping chill,  
All the cold sky scowling black  
O'er the soaking country track ?  
There a sobbing everywhere  
In the miserable air,  
And a thick fog brooding low,  
O'er the black trail of the snow ;  
While the Earth, amid the gloom  
Still half buried in her tomb,  
Swooning lay, and could not rise,  
With dark film upon her eyes.

In many ways 'White Rose and Red' deserves  
to be considered in the first line of the poet's

work. It lacks the intellectualism of 'The City of Dream,' and the mystic realism of 'The Book of Orm,' but considering it as a pure piece of word-painting, and merely from an artistic and a sensuous point of view, we should feel inclined to place it, if not first, very high in the estimating scale. The contrasts are obtained not only by variety of colouring and tone in the painting of the atmosphere, but also in the striking blending of the elements of Comedy and Tragedy; and there is nothing but the highest literary success obtained in the contrasting of the simple, irresponsible, trusting virtue of the red rose, with the equally simple, yet conventional, virtuosity of the white. The red rose is a child of mere sensuous emotions, the handmaiden of the flowers, the trees, the river, and the sky. The white rose is parochial excellence personified, whose ever keen eye is on the protection of her virtue. What the red rose deemed holy were the winds and the waves, the moon and the stars, the waters and God's hunting-field; for the white, the holy things were all to be gained under the shadow of the nearest belfry.

## CHAPTER VI

### 'BALDER THE BEAUTIFUL' AND 'THE EARTHQUAKE'

A 'Skaal' to the gods has always been a favourite song of Mr. Buchanan's. He has sung of 'Ades, King of Hell,' 'Selene the Moon,' and 'Iris the Rainbow,' and on the grave of the older gods must eventually raise a tremulous wail to the newer gods, whose coming darkened the groves of Pan. In 'Balder the Beautiful' the rimes of Scandinavian mythology have supplied the poet with a new 'Song of Divine Death,' and round the Northern god he has wreathed the songs of despair at the ceaseless coming of the swift-winged Angel. This generation has seen at least three Balders — the 'Balder Dead' of Matthew Arnold, the 'Balder' of Sydney Dobell, and the 'Balder the Beautiful' of Robert Buchanan. Mr. Dobell's tragedy has no bearing on the Balder of Deity, and the following note of the poet contains a reference to Mr. Arnold's that indicates the dissimilarity of the two. 'It may be well for readers of the following poem to dismiss from their minds all recollection of the "Eddas," Ewald's "Balder," Oehlenschläger's "Balder hün Gode," and

even Mr. Arnold's "Balder Dead." With the hero of these familiar works my Balder has little in common; he is neither the shadowy god of the "Edda," nor the colossal hero of Ewald, nor the good principle of Oehlenschläger, nor the Homeric demigod of Mr. Arnold. In the presentation of both the Father and Son, I have reverted to the lines of the most primitive mythology; discovering in the one the northern Messiah, as well as the northern Apollo, in the other (instead of the degraded Odin of later superstition) the Alfadur, or temporarily omnipotent godhead, who, despite his darker features, has affinity with both the Zeus of the Eleusinian mysteries and the Jehovah of the Bible.'

But as the poet adds, 'it is unnecessary, however, further to explain the spirit of a poem which the competent reader will interpret in his own way, and which, if it fulfils its purpose at all, should have many meanings for many minds.'

For those who count the later efforts of the poet as the work of a writer daring in purpose and too reckless in method, who find in 'The Wandering Jew,' 'The Devil's Case,' yes, even in 'The City of Dream,' the heresy of uncompromising Eclecticism, a heresy which in their view destroys the value of these poems as works of art, 'Balder the Beautiful' will probably stand as the high-water mark of the poet's imagination and poetical genius. It can be regarded in the same category as 'The City of Dream' in that its success lies in the power of the poet to grasp and

portray with suggestive art the ever-changing expression on the face of nature, and with that insight which is the brightest star in the crown of the poet, to weave a subtle meaning and to suggest the soul's interpretation for the changing floods that pass from the Eternal Spring, and flow into the varied channels of nature.

Like most of the poet's work, it sounds the keynote of despair in the face of misery and death, with a belief in the ultimate triumph of the human soul, echoed in the final dictum that 'All that is beautiful shall abide, all that is base shall die.'

A poem, 'A Song of a Dream,' serves as a prelude, of which these are three of the stanzas:

O what is this cry in our burning ears,  
 And what is this light on our eyes, dear love ?  
 The cry is the cry of the rolling years,  
 As they break on the sun-rock, far above ;  
 And the light is the light of that rock of gold  
 As it burneth bright in a starry sea ;  
 And the cry is clearer a hundredfold,  
 And the light more bright, when I gaze on thee.  
 My weak eyes dazzle beneath that gleam,  
 My sad ears deafen to hear that cry :  
 I was born in a dream, and I dwell in a dream,  
 And I go in a dream to die !

O what are the voices around my way,  
 And what are these shadows that stir below ?  
 The voices of waifs in a world astray,  
 The shadows of souls that come and go.  
 And I hear and see, and I wonder more,  
 For their features are fair and strange as mine,  
 But most I wonder when most I pore  
 On the passionate peace of this face of thine.  
 We walk in silence by wood and stream,  
 Our gaze upturned to the same blue sky :  
 We move in a dream, and we love in a dream,  
 And we go in our dream to die !

O closer creep to this breast of mine ;  
 We rise, we mingle, we break, dear love !  
 A space on the crest of the wave we shine,  
 With light and music and mirth we move ;  
 Before and behind us (fear not, sweet !)     Blackens the trough of the surging sea—  
 A little moment our mouths may meet,  
 A little moment I cling to thee ;  
 Onward the wonderful waters stream,  
 'Tis vain to struggle, 'tis vain to cry—  
 We wake in a dream, and we ache in a dream,  
 And we break in a dream, and die !

The Birth of Balder opens with the ‘Song’ in the following metre :

There blent with his growing  
 The leaf and the flower,  
 The wind lightly blowing  
     Its balm from afar,  
 The smile of the sunshine,  
 The sob of the shower,  
 The beam of the moonshine,  
     The gleam of the star.  
 'Mid shining of faces  
     And waving of wings,  
 With gifts from all places  
     Came beautiful things ;  
 The blush from the blossom,  
     The bloom from the corn,  
 Blent into his bosom,  
     Ere Balder was born.  
 . . . . .  
 In the sedge of the river  
     The swan makes its nest ;  
 In the mere, with no quiver,  
     Stands shadow'd the crane ;  
 Earth happy and still is,  
     Peace dwells in her breast,  
 And the lips of her lilies  
     Drink balm from the rain ;  
 The lamb in the meadow  
     Upsprings with no care,  
 Deep in the wood's shadow  
     Is born the young bear ;  
 The ash and the alder,  
     The flowers and the corn,  
 All waited for Balder, —  
     And Balder is born !



This song is embodied in fourteen stanzas, and is a picture of the earth as it prepared itself for the birth of the 'God.' We next view the birth, growth, and attainment of Godhead of the young spirit. 'Lovely as light and blossoms are, and gentle as the dew, a white god stainless as a star deep hidden' is Balder. Leaving him upon a bank of flowers, 'Frea,' his mother, flies upward to the heavens, and at the feet of the All-Father announces that the young god is dead, at which there is joy in heaven. Meanwhile Balder, down in the forest, is growing into the splendour of his manhood.

He drinks no nurture of the breast,  
 No mother's kiss he knows;  
 Warm as a song-bird in its nest  
 He feels the light, and grows.

Around him flock all gentle things  
 Which range the forest free:  
 Each shape that blooms, each shape that sings,  
 Looks on him silently.

The light is melted on his lips  
 And on his eyes of blue,  
 And from the shining leaves he sips  
 The sweetness of the dew.

O look into his happy eyes,  
 As lustrous as the dew!  
 A light like running water lies  
 Within their depths of blue;

And there the white cloud's shadow dim  
 Stirs, mirror'd soft and gray,  
 And far within the dream-dews swim  
 With melancholy ray.

His hair is like the midnight sun's,  
All golden-red and bright ;  
But radiance as of moonrise runs  
Upon his limbs of white.

Quietly as a moonbeam creeps  
He moves from place to place ;  
Soft steals the starlight, as he sleeps,  
To breathe upon his face.

Now brightly gleams the soft green sod,  
The golden seeds are sown ;  
O pale white lily of a god,  
Thou standest now full blown !

The goddess Freya returns to earth to find Balder, and 'when the trumpet of day was blown from the great golden gateways of the sun, and when leaf by leaf the crimson rose o' the east open'd, and leaf by leaf illumed in turn, glittered the snowy lily of the north,' she meets her son, 'bright, beautiful, and palpably divine.' In his eyes 'immortal innocence and mortal peace are bent to love and gentleness divine.' Under the ministration of the starlight and the moonlight, the dew and the flowers, he has grown into beauty and strength :

And from the crimson of divine deep dawns  
And from the flush of setting suns, thy cheeks  
Have gather'd such a splendour as appals  
The vision, even mine.

And ne'er was sound of falling summer showers  
On boughs with lilac laden and with rose,  
Or cuckoo-cries o'er emerald uplands heard,  
Or musical murmurs of dark summer dawns,  
More sweet than Balder's voice.

Balder speaks to his mother of how the world has kindled to him like an opening rose, and how in the gladness of the world great joy had come to him, and in the love of her celestial looks he reads the answer to the mystery of his dim earthly being. He has had dreams of other gods, and in horror he reveals the truth that he has seen his Father—the stern, cruel force that sweeps with unsympathetic look over all things great and small. The mystery of Death oppresses him—all the earth has become darkened by the sight of the death of one small bird. The mother tells Balder that he must journey with her to that dim Land which lies ‘ev’n as a cloud around the Father’s feet’—and they set forth. As they go they pass by an ocean where the god views for the first time the form of the human dead. His soul is much disturbed, and to his questioning the answer comes that man is to the gods ‘no more than singing birds that soar a little flight and fall.’

On the Heavenward journey they come to where the goddesses dwell—Rota, ‘a tall shape with mailed plates upon her breast, a skirt blood-red, and in her hand a spear,’ Gefion, Eir, Freya, and others. ‘These lilies fair, blown in the still pools of Eternity,’ are asked by Freia to give a benediction to the young god. This is the picture of Freya :

But as he gently came there interposed  
A wonder of new brightness,—such a shape,  
So perfect in divine white loveliness,  
As never mortal yet beheld and lived.

And Balder trembled, and his bosom heaved  
 With an exceeding sweetness strange and new,  
 While close to his there came a shining face,  
 Still as a sunbeam, dimmer than a dream.  
 And Freya, for 'tis she whose touch is life  
 To happy lovers, and to loveless men  
 Is sickness and despair, said, breathing warm,  
 While on her alabaster arms love's light  
 Was flushing faint as through a rose's leaves,  
 'Let all my sisters greet thee as they will,  
 I love thee, Balder! since of lovely things  
 Thou art the brightest and the loveliest!'  
 And lo! ere he was ware of her intent,  
 Unto his cheek she prest a warm red mouth  
 Kings of great empires would have swoon'd to touch,  
 And poet's heavenly-dower'd would have died  
 To dream of kissing. Then thro' Balder ran  
 A new miraculous rapture such as feels  
 The dark Earth when the scented Summer leaps  
 Full-blossom'd as a bridegroom to her arms;  
 Such as musk-roses know when blown apart  
 By sunbeams in mid-June; and Balder's sense  
 Swoon'd, and he seem'd strewn o'er with fruit and flowers,  
 And on his lids were touches like warm rain,  
 And on his nostrils and his parted lips  
 Delicious balm and spicy odours fell,  
 And all his soul was like a young maid's frame  
 Bathed in the warmth of love's first virgin dream.

And as for the young god:

Balder's loveliness in that bright place  
 Was as the soft sheen of the summer moon  
 Arising silvern in the cloudless west  
 Above the sunset seas of orange gold;  
 And there was trouble in his human eyes  
 Most melancholy sweet,—trouble like tears,  
 Of starlight, or the tremor of the dew.

We view the pale Ydun, 'with the pallor of wan  
 waters that wash for evermore the cold white  
 feet of spectral polar moons,' who gives to Balder  
 the mystical apples of the gods, which fill him  
 with a supreme and unfamiliar life. Leaving the

grove of the goddesses, he wanders on with Frea to the City of the Gods, far beyond the wastes of the North to the region of the Polar Fires. There, standing on the verge of a vast sea of ice, they espy Asgard :

Asgard, the great City of the Gods,  
For ever burnt to ashes night by night  
And dawn by dawn for evermore renew'd.  
And mortals when they see from out their caves  
The City crumbling with a thousand fires  
Cry, 'Lo, the Sunset!'—and when evermore  
They mark it springing up miraculous  
From its own ashes strewn beside the sea,  
Cry, 'Lo, the Sunrise!' There, within its walls  
The great gods strive in thickening fumes of fight,  
Gathering together bloody ghosts of men ;  
And when the great towers tremble and the spires  
Shoot earthward and the fiery ashes smoke,  
The gods exult a little space, and wave  
Their brands for all the vales of earth to see ;  
But when the ashes blacken, and the moon  
Shines on the City's embers, silently  
They creep into their starry tents and sleep,—  
Till like a rose unfolding leaf by leaf,  
The immortal City rises !

Here Balder calls upon his Father, and from out the darkness come thunders from heaven ; and following the murmur of the Father's voice, he proceeds onward, Frea awaiting his return. He comes again, spectral white, and in 'his eyes a shadowy pain, still divine but sorrowful.' He has been cast out by the Father and his brethren. He found there 'no love but protestation absolute,' and was driven forth, pursued by the lightning darts of the All-Father.

Then Frea wail'd, 'Tis o'er ! my hope is o'er !  
Thy Father loves thee not, but casts thee forth—

Where wilt thou find a place to rest thy feet?'  
 But Balder answer'd, 'Where the cushat builds  
 Her nest amid green leaves, and where wild roses  
 Hang lamps to light the dewy feet of dawn,  
 And where the starlight and the moonlight slumber,  
 Ev'n there, upon the balmy lap of Earth,  
 Shall I not sleep again?'

Balder returns to earth, while Freia goes to the  
 feet of the Father to plead for her son, and to  
 claim the godhead for him. While Balder

Walks on the mountains,  
 He treads on the snows;  
 He loosens the fountains  
 And quickens the wells;  
 He is filling the chalice  
 Of lily and rose,  
 He is down in the valleys  
 And deep in the dells,—  
 He smiles, and buds spring to him,  
 The bright and the dark;  
 He speaks, and birds sing to him,  
 The finch and the lark—  
 He is down by the river,  
 He is up by the mere,  
 Woods gladden, leaves quiver,  
 For Balder is here.

There is some divine trouble  
 On earth and in air—  
 Trees tremble, brooks bubble,  
 Ants loosen the sod;  
 Warm footfalls awaken  
 Whatever is fair;  
 Sweet rain-dews are shaken  
 To quicken each clod.  
 The wild rainbows o'er him  
 Are melted and fade,  
 The grass runs before him  
 Thro' meadow and glade;  
 Green branches close round him,  
 The leaves whisper near—  
 'He is ours—we have found him—  
 Bright Balder is here!'

. . . . .

He is here, he is moving  
 On mountain and dale,  
 And all things grow loving,  
 And all things grow bright :  
 Buds bloom in the meadows,  
 Milk foams in the pail,  
 There is scent in the shadows,  
 And sound in the light :  
 O listen ! he passes  
 Thro' valleys of flowers,  
 With springing of grasses  
 And singing of showers.  
 Earth wakes—he has called her,  
 Whose voice she holds dear ;  
 She was waiting for Balder,  
 And Balder is here !

His love for the creatures of earth finds expression in the song of Balder's return ; and as he walks in the forests, with beast and bird administering to him, and as he wanders midst hamlets and huts, and amongst men and women, he declares his allegiance to Earth.

All human eyes to him were sweet,  
 He loved the touch of hands,  
 He kissed the print of human feet  
 Upon the soft sea-sands.

. . . . .  
 He raised his eyes to those cold skies  
 Which he had left behind,—  
 And saw the banners of the gods  
 Blown back upon the wind.

He watch'd them as they came and fled,  
 Then his divine eyes fell.  
 'I love the green Earth best,' he said,  
 'And I on Earth will dwell !'

He conquers and blesses all the things of earth,  
 and is full of the joy of living things, until upon

his ears falls the song whose tidings are that  
'Death makes all things dark.'

'And blest are children, springing fair of face  
Like gentle blossoms in the dwelling-place;  
We clasp them close, forgetting for a space  
Death makes the world so dark.

'And yet though life is glad and love divine,  
This Shape we fear is here !' the summer shine,—  
He blights the fruit we pluck, the wreath we twine,  
And soon he leaves us stark.

'He haunts us fleetly on the snowy steep,  
He finds us as we sow and as we reap,  
He creepeth in to slay us as we sleep,—  
Ah ! Death makes all things dark !'

Now all his peace was poisoned by this cry to the gods for pity, and by this black Shadow which encumbered the earth. His heart grew heavy as he saw how the cold hand sought out all, and how none escaped. He cries to his Father and to the gods to stay the slayer, that the world may rest in peace; but the dark gods only smiled, 'with smiles like sullen lightning on the lips of tempest.' Balder cries, 'What is this thing, and who hath sent it?'

There came a murmur, 'None can answer thee,  
Save him thou followest with weary feet !'  
Wherefore he wander'd on, and still in vain  
Sought Death the slayer. Into burial-places,  
Heaven with stones and seal'd with slime of grass,  
He track'd him, found him sitting lonely there  
Like one that dreams, his dreadful pitiless eyes  
Fix'd on the sunset star. Or oftentimes  
Beheld him running swiftly like a wolf  
Who scents some stricken prey along the ground.  
Or saw him into empty huts crawl slow,  
And while the man and woman toiled i' the field,  
Gaze down with stony orbs a little space



Upon the sickly babe, which open'd eyes,  
 And laugh'd, and spread its little faded hands  
 In elfin play. Nay, oft in Balder's sight  
 The form seem'd gentle, and the fatal face  
 Grew beautiful and very strangely fair.  
 Yet evermore while his swift feet pursued,  
 Darkling it fled away, and evermore  
 Most pitiful rose cries of beasts and birds,  
 Most desolate rose moans of stricken men,  
 Till Balder wept for sorrow's sake, and cried,  
 'Help me, my Father!'

As he wanders on, he meets many signs of the  
 destroyer, and, overcome by the misery of the  
 terrible scourge, he vows that he will not pause  
 nor sleep till he has held Death by the hand, and  
 gazed into his eyes.

Here follows Balder's quest for Death, beginning:

He sought him on the mountains bleak and bare  
 And on the windy moors ;  
 He found his secret footprints everywhere,  
 Yea, ev'n by human doors.

All round the deerfold on the shrouded height  
 The starlight glimmer'd clear ;  
 Therein sat Death, wrapt round with vapours white  
 Touching the dove-eyed deer.

He wanders through the world, up to the region  
 of the snows and south into tropic lands. The  
 Shadow passes him at times, but without his  
 being able to hold it. He sees a bloody fight of  
 ships, and more signs of the destroyer's hands.  
 He meets Ydun, who offers him again the fruits of  
 Immortality, telling Balder that even Death  
 himself

Hath fed from out my hand and from my fruits  
 Drank immortality ; and lo, he walks  
 Immortal among mortals, on Earth's ways  
 Shedding the sad leaves of humanity.

Balder promises to eat the fruit if Ydun will lead him to Death, a promise which is readily given. 'By the gods of Asgard I swear to lead thee to him, and to read a rime which, whispered in his ear, shall make him meek and weak as any lamb to do thy will.' Balder eats the fruit, and they come to the Altar of Sacrifice, where Death broods over his dead. Balder speaks to Death and asks him why he slays, and who sent him to kill?—to which Death replies :

'I know not whence my feet have come,  
Nor whither they must go—  
Lonely I wander, dark and dumb,  
In summer and in snow.

'And ever, ever as I pace  
Along my lonely track,  
The light retires before my face,  
Advancing at my back !

'But ever, ever if I turn  
And would my steps retrace,  
Close to my back that light doth burn,  
But flies before my face

'I set faint gleams around their lips,  
I smooth their brows and hair,  
I place within their clay-cold grips  
The lilies of despair.

'O think of this and blame not me,  
Thou with the eyes divine—  
A Shadow creeps from sea to sea,  
Stranger than thine or mine.

'Who made the white bear and the seal ?  
The eagle and the Lamb ?  
As these am I—I live and feel  
ONE made me, and I am.'

Balder absolves him, and tells how good he has found the Earth, and that only one thing is

bitter—that 'Eternal Death, which sits by his sad and silent sea of graves, singing a song that slays the hopes of men.' He prays to God for death, so that his sacrifice may save others; and then, as the gods send their snow to cover him in his sleep, 'the other,' who laid down his life for mankind, approaches, and as Balder lies there in his sleep of death, cries to him to awake :

' I am thine elder Brother  
Come from beyond the sea,  
For many a weary night and day  
I have been seeking thee !'

The Christ tells of his own land and his own death, and of the other gentle gods whom he had visited, all of whom had died for men. Amongst these is Prometheus.

' I wander'd west where eagles soar  
Far o'er the realms of rains,  
And there, among pale mountain peaks,  
One hung in iron chains.

' His head was hoary as the snow  
Of that serene cold clime,  
Yet like a child he smiled, and sang  
The cradle-song of Time.

' And as he sang upon his cross,  
And in no human tones,  
The cruel gods who placed him there  
Were shaken on their thrones.

' I kiss'd him softly on the lips,  
And sighing set him free—  
He wanders now in the green world,  
Divine, like thee and me. . . .

Why, asks Balder, should I rise ?—

' O wherefore should I rise at all  
Since all is black above,  
And trampled 'neath the feet of gods  
Lie all the shapes I love ?  
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And Christ cried, gazing down on Death,  
Making a mystic sign,  
'Now blessings on my servant Death,  
For *he* too is divine.

'O Balder, he who fashion'd us,  
And bade us live and move,  
Shall weave for Death's sad heavenly hair  
Immortal flowers of love.

'Ah! never fail'd my servant Death,  
Whene'er I named his name,—  
But at my bidding he hath flown  
As swift as frost or flame.

'Yea, as a sleuth-hound tracks a man,  
And finds his form, and springs,  
So hath he hunted down the gods  
As well as human things!

'Yet only thro' the strength of Death  
A god shall fall or rise—  
A thousand lie on the cold snows,  
Stone still, with marble eyes.

'But whosoe'er shall conquer Death,  
Tho' mortal man he be,  
Shall in his season rise again,  
And live, with thee, and me!

'And whosoe'er loves mortals most  
Shall conquer Death the best,  
Yea, whosoe'er grows beautiful  
Shall grow divinely blest.'

The white Christ raised his shining face  
To that still bright'ning sky.  
'Only the beautiful shall abide,  
Only the base shall die!'

**Led by Balder, Christ goes to the City of the  
Gods, passing up the Bridge of Ghosts.**

'O brother, place thy hand in mine,'  
The gentle Balder said;  
The rayless waters roar'd beneath,  
The Bridge flash'd overhead.

Then hand in hand against the wind  
 They faltered upward slow,  
 On stairs of crimson and of gold  
 Climbing the wondrous Bow.

Like a great rainbow of the earth  
 It rose with faint hues seven,  
 And thro' the purple of the arch  
 Glimmer'd the lights of heaven.

When they had reach'd the midmost height,  
 In air they stood so high,  
 To one beneath they would have seem'd  
 As stars upon the sky.

Coming to the footstool of the throne, Balder  
 announces his resurrection :

The rune is woven, the spell is spoken,  
 And lo ! the dream of the gods is broken,  
 And each pale throne is shaken.  
 They rise, they tremble against the sky,  
 They shriek an answer to Balder's cry,  
 And white as death they waken !  
 Gods they glimmer in frozen mail,  
 Their faces are flashing marble pale,  
 They rise erect, and they wave their hands,  
 They scatter the shifting snows as sands,  
 And gaze in the face of the Father ! . . .

. . . Blacker, blacker, the night is growing,  
 Faster, faster, the snow is snowing—  
 Silently looking thro' the storm,  
 Towers the one gigantic Form,  
 And all around with a trumpet sound  
 The wintry winds are blowing.

The light of doom is in his eyes, his arms spread wide for  
 slaughter,  
 He sits 'mid gleams of burning skies, and walls of wind-  
 blown water,  
 Behind the outline of his cheeks the pale aurora flashes,  
 He broods 'mid moveless mountain peaks and looks thro'  
 fiery lashes :  
 On heaven and earth that round him float in whirls of snowy  
 wonder,  
 He looks, and from his awful throat there comes the cry of  
 thunder !

'BALDER ! BALDER !'

He learns the hatred of the Gods, their hatred for his summer face, his soft footfall, his earthly love, his heavenly dower, and the rime that was written and read. They had cursed him before, but they curse their deepest now when they read that rime by the light of his love for men. After long pleading between the Father and the two sons, Balder calls upon Death, who has followed them to the City of the Gods, to conquer the Father and take the Throne, all the other gods, having flown at the coming of the Christ. Death obeys, and then :

And the hair of Death is golden, the face of Death is glowing,  
While softly around his form he folds his mighty wings,  
And vast as the vast blue heavens the fair faint form is growing,  
But the face that all men fear is bright with beautiful things.  
Ev'n so the Brethren wait where the darkest snows are drifted,  
Small as two doves that light in a wilderness alone,  
While bright on the blood-red skies, with luminous head uplifted,  
In a dream divine upgazing, Death sitteth upon his throne.

And the 'Song' ends with the canto 'From Death to Life.'

'O Balder, Balder, wherefore hide  
Thy face from the blue sky !'  
The voice was music, but it cried  
Like any human cry.

'O Balder, Balder,' the white Christ said,  
'Look up and answer me,'  
Bright Balder raised his golden head,  
Like sunrise on the sea.

'O Brother, I was weeping then  
For those whom Death o'erthrew.  
Shall I, whose eyes have mourn'd for men,  
Not mourn my brethren too ?'

The white Christ answered back, and cried,  
Shining under the sky,  
'All that is beautiful shall abide,  
All that is base shall die.

'And if among thy sleeping kin  
 One soul divine there be,  
 That soul shall walk the world and win  
 New life, with thee and me.

'Death shall not harm one holy hair,  
 Nor blind one face full sweet;  
 Death shall not mar what Love made fair;  
 Nay, Death shall kiss their feet !'

. . . . .

In Balder's hand Christ placed his own,  
 And it was golden weather,  
 And on that berg as on a throne  
 The Brethren stood together !

And countless voices far and wide  
 Sang sweet beneath the sky—  
 'All that is beautiful shall abide,  
 All that is base shall die !'

In 1885 appeared the first volume of 'The Earthquake,' or 'Six Days and a Sabbath'—this volume dealing with the first three days. The main idea of the poem is a kind of New Republic, in which men and women of divers temperaments and views of life are made to express in verse various aspects of their intellectual, moral, and religious points of view. An earthquake is supposed to have taken place in London, and Lady Barbara of Kensington, Flower of Midlothian, the Agnostic queen, full of culture to the finger-tips, and married to a Midas, flies north to her estate on Tweedside, taking with her her Court—the last great traveller, the newest painter and musician, the poet latest found and most divine, scientists, professors of all -ologies and -isms, the favourites of Fashion and the Muse—every male or female wanderer :—

Out of the beaten highway of the creeds  
Was gathered into Barbara's peaceful fold :  
The castaway who had in soul's despair,  
His cassock lost, his prayer-book left i' the hold,  
Plunged overboard from that old ship the Church,  
Now tossing water-logg'd amidst the storm.

**We are told that**

When the murmur of the Earthquake came,  
The teacup trembled in the scoffer's hand,  
The wise looked foolish, and the lions ran  
Lowing together like affrighted stirks.  
In that dread moment he who faced the Sphinx  
And read annihilation in its eyes,  
Who, from the cynosure of mastery,  
Survey'd the conflict and the wreck of worlds,  
Saw suns grow dark like torches suddenly  
Plunged hissing into water, and foretold,  
With scientific equanimity,  
The sure extinction of the human race,  
Became as terrorstricken as a bairn  
Who, waking suddenly at dead of night  
To find the night-light out, begins to wail.  
Then many named God's Judgment with a sigh  
Who thitherto had named it with a smile !

For the reception of the mediæval court of Love  
and Learning our Lady Barbara makes elaborate  
arrangement, 'and since the Priory could not  
lodge them all, the inns and cottages around about  
were full of spectacled and bearded men, whose  
strange ways made the country-people gape in  
wonder and in awe.' It is summer-time, and  
Nature is pluming herself in all her splendour.  
On the first afternoon everybody is seated out of  
doors, and Lady Barbara is speaking :

The canker-worm of Ennni gnaws the heart  
Of Pleasure's full-blown rose ! Come, who 'll devise  
Some sport to fleet away the golden time ?  
Who 'll lead our drowsy-headed idleness  
In flowery fetters of some pleasant toil ?



Despite the sneers of the comic vivisectionist, Douglas Sutherland, young cynic of the 'Cynical Review,' Mr. Spinoza Smith, the plump pantheist, with luminous eye and hanging underlip, loose and lax logic, says :

'Better to rave like the old oracle  
Than, quivering like a restless tadpole, haunt  
The muddy shallows of perpetual doubt !'  
Turning to Barbara, 'Since we moderns seek  
A summer pastime like those Florentines,  
Why let not that same Problem be our theme,  
And let each man and woman tell in turn  
Some chronicle of those who, quick or dead,  
Have wander'd problem-haunted through the world ?

This is agreed upon, and Barbara is crowned Queen of the Court of which the poet is appointed laureate, while the cynic is called upon to assume the hood and baldrick of the fool. A tryst is made to meet on the morrow, and the poet wanders off, pondering the green world's problem with a poet's heart.

Soft as a leaf

The gloaming fell, and flutter'd like a veil  
Over the half-closed eyelids of the world.  
Stars glimmer'd faintly, opening one by one  
And blossoming above me, while I stole  
Through warmly scented shadows till I gained  
Dark fern-clad slopes that ran to hills of heather,  
And looking heavenward saw a painter's vision.  
There like a naked maiden stood the Moon,  
Wading in saffron shallows of the west :  
Timidly, with a tender backward glance,  
She reach'd a faltering foot to feel the way,  
Then, brightly smiling as the lucent waves  
Wash'd, tipt with splendour, round her swan-white throat,  
Bent forward, cleft the dusk with ivory hands,  
And swam in splendour thro' the seas of night.

The first day opens with a discussion on monks,

in the midst of which Miranda tells the remarkable and weird legend of Julia Cytherea—the most strikingly original of the poet's efforts in this work. It is a tale of a musing monk who, weeding his garden outside Rome, is aroused by the news that Venus herself has been disentombed in Rome 'By some dark chemic trick of fingers old, embalm'd within that ivory coffin cold, a thousand years in the tomb; her cheek hath kept its bloom, her eyes their glory, and her hair its gold.' He creeps down to Rome, and there discovers that all Rome is agape at the discovery of the embalmed body of Julia, the child of Claudius.

When thus she turn'd with soft last breath  
Into the chilly arms of Death,  
She might have seen the happy light  
Some sixteen years,—but form so bright  
Ne'er trembled between childish glee  
And tremulous virginity.  
Only a child; yet far too fair  
For any child of mortal air,  
Since Passion's fiery flame, it seem'd,  
Still play'd about her locks, and stream'd  
From 'neath her eyelids; and her limbs  
Were amber with such light as swims  
Round Love's own altar; and her lips,  
Untouch'd by darkness or eclipse,  
Were wonderful and poppy-red  
With kisses of a time long dead,—  
When Love indeed in naked guise  
Still walk'd the world with awful eyes  
And flaming hair. So fair she lay,  
Burning like amber in the ray,  
As burns a lamp with sweet oils fed  
Within some shrine no foot may tread,  
No hand of any mortal man;  
And as men gaze on some new star,  
Men marvell'd while they gazed on her.

She is laid in the Capitol, and the world flocks to

gaze upon her beauty; Marcus among the rest, who, watching the crystal mirror of her sleep, and gazing on her divine beauty, is fascinated. He hides, and in the dead of night interviews the body alone. He soliloquises the sleeping figure, and calls upon her to awake and save the world for Beauty's sake, instead of Christ's. We are told of her beauteous awakening, and of how the two walked in the green land of light and love; the poet picturing for us again the golden days of Paganism. In the midst of their joy the Madonna appears, and calls on the Maiden to follow her to her grave, there to wait with darkened eyes in peace, until the Son shall rise. Marcus tries to save her, but the Madonna, touching her on the forehead, turns her to a corpse of marble; then clasping the marble form with piteous cries, Marcus kisses her on the mouth and eyes, crying, 'Awake, awake!' 'till his heart broke for sorrow's sake, and heavy as a stone he falls,' and

At dawn (as old traditions tell),  
When the pale priests and soldiers came  
To see once more that shining frame  
Within her marble tomb, behold!  
Still beautiful, with locks of gold,  
Unfaded to the finger-tips,  
With faint pink cheeks and rose-red lips,  
Her they found softly sleeping on;  
And by her, turn'd to senseless stone,  
Watching her face with eyes of lead,  
Knelt the monk Marcus, cold and dead.

Of other poems that are sung or recited in this court of love, 'Pan at Hampton Court' views in a poetic form contemporary life in the light of Pagan

characterisation. A striking piece of imagery is worthy of note here :

Slowly, softly, westward flew  
Day on wings of gold and blue ;  
As she faded out of sight  
Dark and balmy fell the night.  
Silent 'neath the azure cope,  
Earth, a naked Ethiope,  
Reach'd black arms up through the air,  
    Dragging down the branches bright  
Of the flowering heavens, where  
    Starry fruitage glimmer'd white !  
As he drew them gently near,  
Dewdrops dim and crystal clear  
    Rain'd upon his face and eyes !  
Listening, watching, we could hear  
    His deep breathing 'neath the skies ;  
Suddenly, far down the glade,  
Startled from some place of shade,  
Like an antelope the dim  
Moon upsprang, and looked at him !  
Panting, trembling, in the dark,  
Paused to listen and to mark,  
Then with shimmer dimly fair  
    On from shade to shade did spring,  
Gain'd the fields of heaven, and there  
    Wander'd, calmly pasturing !

Of a different nature is the story of 'Serapion' put into the mouth of a Bishop, the story of a monk who was infinitely happy in the belief of the existence of a personal God, and who was rendered miserable by wise men arguing him out of his faith. To this category also belongs 'Ramon Monat,' whilst we have a foreshadowing of 'The Wandering Jew' in the song 'Storm in the Night.' 'The Voyage of Magellan' is a characteristic piece of Buchananese, and is a spirited and stirring ballad.

O Magellan ! lord and leader !—only He whose fingers frame  
Twisted thews of pard or panther, knot them round their hearts of  
flame,  
Light the emeralds burning brightly in their eyeballs as they roll,  
Could have made that mightier marvel, thine inexorable soul !

O Magellan ! mighty Eagle, circling sunward lost in light,  
Wafting wings of power and striking meaner things that cross thy  
flight,  
God to such as thee gives never lambkin's love or dove's desire—  
Nay, but eyes that scatter terror from a ruthless heart of fire !

And the volume closes with the song 'O Mariners.'

### O MARINERS.

O Mariners, out of the sunlight, and on through the infinite Main,  
We have sailed, departing at morning ;—and now it is morning  
again.

Dimly, darkly, and blindly, our life and our journey begun,  
Blind and deaf was our sense with the fiery sands of the sun.

Then slowly, grown stronger and stronger, feeling from zone on to  
zone,  
We passed the islands of darkness, and reached the sad Ocean,  
alone.

But now we pause for a moment, searching the east and the west,  
Above and beneath us the waters that mirror our eyes in their  
breast !

Behind, the dawn and the darkness,—new dawn around and  
before,—  
Ah me, we are weary, and hunger to rest, and to wonder no more.

Yet never, O Mariners, never were we so stately and fair—  
The forms of the flood obey us, we are lords of the birds of the air.

And yet as we sail we are weeping, and crying, 'Although we have  
ranged  
So far over infinite waters, transformed out of darkness and  
changed,

**We know that the Deep beneath us must drink us and wash us  
away'—**

**Nay, courage—sail on for a season—on, on to the gateways of Day.**

**Our voyage is only beginning—its dreariest dangers are done,  
We now have a compass to guide us, the Soul, and it points to  
the Sun!**

**The stars in their places obey us, the winds are as slaves to our  
sail—**

**Be sure that we never had journey'd so far but to perish and fail!**

**Out of the wonderful sunlight, and on through the infinite Main,  
We have sail'd, departing at morning—and now it is morning  
again!**

## CHAPTER VII

### BALLADS

There are few royal roads in Literature, but there is one door to the public heart which can be opened neither by epic nor ode, but by the simple mediums of song and ballad. Amongst those who use verse, as their soul's interpreter, the writer of a good song is surest of his immortality, and it may be on this account that lyrical poets are, after all, in closest touch with the human heart; and it is possible that when we are only conserving an academic interest in our Spenser, Wordsworth, Milton, Goethe, and Dante, people will still be singing the songs of Burns, Heine, and Beranger; and perhaps when the 'Idylls of the King' is but a volume in a consulting library, 'Break, Break, Break,' will still be a living national possession.

The fate of a great ballad seems none the less sure, and in two hundred years from now Browning may be known only as the writer of 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin,' Coleridge (fortunate very) as the author of 'The Ancient Mariner,' and Longfellow may be a name associated with the 'Wreck of the Hesperus.' Even to-day that

figment, as Mr. Birrell calls him, the Man in the Street, regards Mr. Browning only as a writer of one or two stirring ballads, Thomas Campbell as the author of 'Lord Ullin's Daughter,' and Tennyson as the writer of 'The Charge of the Light Brigade.' Immortality in literature is a vague term embodying a vaguer period of time, but taking the word, even to limit its meaning to a century or two, we may apply it with more ease of conscience to a song or a ballad than we dare to other efforts in poetical construction.

A music sense, and dramatic action, the essentials of the song and ballad respectively, are capable of rapid appreciation when expressed through these two mediums, the just valuation of the more elaborated qualities of other forms of poetical expression necessitating a training which is not to be found in the greater world. For songs and ballads come not to the people by searching, but are, in a sense, unconsciously absorbed into the current of common thought and feeling.

To many Mr. Robert Buchanan is known in a poetical sense as the author of 'Phil Blood's Leap' and 'Fra Giacomo,' and there are thousands who have never even heard of 'The City of Dream' who know by heart 'The Ballad of Judas Iscariot.' A man with the insight and dramatic feeling of Mr. Buchanan could not have avoided becoming a writer of ballads; and more than any other contemporary poet, excepting perhaps Mr. Kipling, he has made the ballad an ever-recurring method of dramatic and poetical expression,



and wherever the language is spoken, 'The Wedding of Shon Maclean' and 'The Wake of Tim O'Hara' are admired and loved for their broad humanity and their humour akin to tears.

Before the publication, in 1864, of the poet's first volume, there had already appeared one of his more famous ballads, that of 'Fra Giacomo,' which, from a purely dramatic point of view, must be considered, unless we are much mistaken, the most perfect of the poet's efforts in this sphere of art. To this period also belongs 'A Curl,' one of the lesser known of the poet's ballads, but none the less striking in the intensity of its passion and the dignity of its theme.

From the miscellaneous poems published from 1866-70 we extract from that fine piece of vigorous English, 'The Death of Roland':

Dead was Gerard the fair, the girl-month'd, the gay,  
 Who jested with the foe he slung his sword to slay;  
 Dead was the giant Guy, big-hearted, small of brain;  
 Dead was the hunchback Sanche, his red hunch slit in twain;  
 Dead was the old hawk Luz, and sleeping by his side  
 His twin-sons, Charles the fleet, and Pierre the serpent-eyed;  
 Dead was Antoine, the same who swore to speak no word  
 Till fivescore heathen heads fell by his single sword;  
 Dead was the wise Gerin, who gript both spear and pen;  
 Sansun was dead, Gereir was dead!—dead were the mighty  
 men!

Then Turpin dropt the torch, that flamed upon the ground,  
 But drinking blood and dew, died out with drizzlie sound;  
 He groped for Roland's heart, and felt it faintly beat,  
 And, feeling on the earth, he found the wine-flask sweet,  
 And, fainting with the toil, slaked not his own great drouth,  
 But, shivering, held the flask to Roland's gentle mouth:  
 E'en then, his Soul shot up, and in its shirt of steel  
 The Corse sank back, with crash like ice that cracks beneath the  
 heel!

' Now, dead and cold, alas ! lieth the noblest wight  
For preaching sermons sweet and wielding sword in fight ;  
His voice was as a trump that on a mountain blows,  
He scatter'd oils of grace and wasted heathen-foes,—  
White Mary take his soul, to join our comrades dear,  
And let him wear his Bishop's crown in heaven above, as here !'

In 'North Coast, and other Poems' (1867-68), there are many stirring poems in a ballad metre, of which the most ambitious effort is 'Meg Blane,' but the most successful is 'The Battle of Drumliemoor,' a ballad of the Covenant Period. If, instead of writing a ballad which conveyed the feeling of that stirring period in Scottish history, the poet had essayed a ballad dealing with an actual historical incident, the success of it would have been assured, if we consider how evidently true to the spirit of the time is the feeling and action of 'The Battle of Drumliemoor.' As it is, one feels that if there never was a battle at Drumliemoor, at least there ought to have been. Of Scottish Ballads, Professor Blackie placed this battle-piece of the poet's very high in the literature of the subject. No extract can convey the unflagging swing of the ballad, the breathless, fiery, fanatical spirit of ecclesiastical soldiery.

Bar the door ! put out the light, for it gleams across the night,  
And guides the bloody motion of their feet ;  
Hush the bairn upon thy breast, lest it guide them in their quest,  
And with water quench the blazing of the peat.  
Now, Wife, sit still and hark !—hold my hand amid the dark ;  
O Jeanie, we are scattered—e'en as aleet !

It was down on Drumliemoor, where it slopes upon the shore,  
And looks upon the breaking of the bay,  
In the kirkyard of the dead, where the heather is thrice red  
With the blood of those asleep beneath the clay ;  
And the Howiesons were there, and the people of Glen Ayr,  
And we gathered in the gloom o' night—to pray.

How! Sit at home in fear, when God's Voice was in mine ear,  
 When the priests of Baal were slaughtering His sheep?  
 Nay! there I took my stand, with my reap-hook in my hand,  
 For bloody was the sheaf that I might reap;  
 And the Lord was in His skies, with a thousand dreadful eyes,  
 And His breathing made a trouble on the Deep.

Each mortal of the band brought his weapon in his hand,  
 Though the chopper or the spit was all he bare;  
 And not a man but knew the work he had to do,  
 If the Fiend should fall upon us unaware.  
 And our looks were ghastly white, but it was not affright,—  
 The Lord our God was present to our prayer.

Oh, solemn, sad, and slow rose the stern voice of Monroe,  
 And he curst the curse of Babylon the Whore;  
 We could not see his face, but a gleam was in its place,  
 Like the phosphor of the foam upon the shore;  
 And the eyes of all were dim, as they fixed themselves on him,  
 And the Sea filled up the pauses with its roar.

But it is in the volume of 'Miscellaneous Poems and Ballads' which grew up between 1878-83, that we find the best-known of the poet's efforts in this direction. Here are 'The Strange Country,' 'The Ballad of Judas Iscariot,' 'The Lights of Leith,' 'The Wedding of Shon Maclean,' 'Phil Blood's Leap,' 'O'Connor's Wake,' 'James Avery,' and other ballads, which have served the purpose of many a reciter, professional and amateur. 'The Lights of Leith' and 'Phil Blood's Leap' possess in themselves no special characteristic of the poet's modes of expression, and despite their popularity, need not concern us here. Of the 'Ballad of Judas Iscariot' we can only say that it stands in relation to Mr. Buchanan's name, in the eye of public estimation and in the public memory, in much the same way as 'The Ancient

Mariner' stands to Coleridge, and is in many ways constructed on homologous lines. In association with the Vision of the Man Accurst in 'The Book of Orm,' it embodies the essence of the ultimate optimism of the poet's philosophy, 'God shall cast away no man.' It is the poem that, probably, has attracted a greater number of readers to Mr. Buchanan's more ambitious work than any other of his efforts in verse or prose. Its simplicity, its inevitableness, if the word is allowable in this case, command the attention at once, and the sense of mysticism and solemnity draws us with no uncertain hand from the vulgarity of common experiences. The ballad consists of forty-nine stanzas, of which we give twenty.

'Twas the body of Judas Iscariot  
Lay in the field of Blood ;  
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Beside the body stood.

Black was the earth by night,  
And black was the sky ;  
Black, black were the broken clouds,  
Tho' the red Moon went by.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot,  
So grim, and gaunt, and gray,  
Raised the body of Judas Iscariot,  
And carried it away.

And as he bare it from the field  
Its touch was cold as ice,  
And the ivory teeth within the jaw  
Rattled aloud, like dice.

As the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Carried its load with pain,  
The Eye of Heaven, like a lanthorn's eye,  
Open'd and shut again.

## ROBERT BUCHANAN

Half he walk'd, and half he seemed  
 Lifted on the cold wind ;  
 He did not turn, for chilly hands  
 Were pushing from behind.

For days and nights he wandered on  
 Upon an open plain,  
 And the days went by like blinding mist,  
 And the nights like rushing rain.

For days and nights he wandered on,  
 All thro' the Wood of Woe ;  
 And the nights went by like moaning wind,  
 And the days like drifting snow.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot  
 Came with a weary face—  
 Alone, alone, and all alone,  
 Alone in a lonely place !

He wandered east, he wandered west,  
 And heard no human sound ;  
 For months and years, in grief and tears,  
 He wandered round and round.

And the wold was white with snow,  
 And his foot-marks black and damp,  
 And the ghost of the silvern Moon arose,  
 Holding her yellow lamp.

And the icicles were on the eaves,  
 And the walls were deep with white,  
 And the shadows of the guests within  
 Pass'd on the window light.

The body of Judas Iscariot  
 Lay stretched along the snow ;  
 'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot  
 Ran swiftly to and fro.

To and fro, and up and down,  
 He ran so swiftly there,  
 As round and round the frozen Pole  
 Glideth the lean white bear.

The Bridegroom stood in the open door,  
And he waved hands still and slow,  
And the third time that he waved his hands  
The air was thick with snow.

And of every flake of falling snow,  
Before it touched the ground,  
There came a dove, and a thousand doves  
Made sweet sound.

'Twas the body of Judas Iscariot  
Floated away full fleet,  
And the wings of the dove that bare it off,  
Were like its winding-sheet.

'Twas the Bridegroom stood at the open door,  
And beckon'd, smiling sweet ;  
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot  
Stole in, and fell at his feet.

' The Holy Supper is spread within,  
And the many candles shine,  
And I have waited long for thee,  
Before I poured the wine ! '

The supper wine is poured at last,  
The lights burn bright and fair,  
Iscariot washes the Bridegroom's feet,  
And dries them with his hair.

'The Strange Country' is another of Mr. Buchanan's better-known poems, with the often-quoted opening lines :

I have come from a mystical Land of Light  
To a Strange Country ;  
The Land I have left is forgotten quite  
In the Land I see.

'Tis life, all life, be it pleasure or pain,  
In the Field and the Flood,  
In the beating Heart, in the burning Brain,  
In the Flesh and the Blood.

Like waves in the cold Moon's silvern breath  
 They gather and roll,  
 Each crest of white is a birth or a death,  
 Each sound is a Soul.

Oh, whose is the Eye that gleams so bright  
 O'er this Strange Country?  
 It draws us along with a chain of light,  
 As the Moon the Sea!

To quite a different tune is the 'Wedding of Shon Maclean.' Here we have the poet in his wildest Celtic mood. Here he throws his glamour not on to weary souls and aspiring dreamers, but on to that robust Paganism which finds its truest expression in the unadulterated Celt. It is unnecessary for us to tell the tale again, but the following excerpts will recall the story and the method:

To the wedding of Shon Maclean,  
 Twenty Pipers together  
 Came in the wind and the rain  
 Playing across the heather;  
 Backward their ribbons flew,  
 Blast upon blast they blew,  
 Each clad in tartan new,  
 Bonnet, and blackcock feather:  
 And every Piper was fou,  
 Twenty Pipers together!

Like the whistling of birds, like the humming of bees,  
 Like the sough of the south-wind in the trees,  
 Like the singing of angels, the playing of shawms,  
 Like Ocean itself with its storms and its calms,  
 Were the strains of Shon, when with cheeks aflame  
 He blew a blast thro' the pipes of fame.

Then out he slipt, and each man sprang  
 To his feet, and with 'hooch' the chamber rang!

'Clear the tables!' shriek'd out one—  
 A leap, a scramble,—and it was done!  
 And then the Pipers all in a row  
 Tuned their pipes and began to blow,  
 While all to dance stood fain:  
 Sandy of Isla and Earach More,  
 Dougal Dhu from Kinfiannan shore,  
 Played up the company on the floor  
 At the wedding of Shon Maclean.

But like an earthquake was the din  
 When Shon himself led the Duchess in!  
 And she took her place before him there,  
 Like a white mouse dancing with a bear!  
 So trim and tiny, so slim and sweet,  
 Her blue eyes watching Shon's great feet,  
 With a smile that could not be resisted,  
 She jigged, and jumped, and twirl'd, and twist'd!  
 Sandy of Isla led off the reel,  
 The Duke began it with toe and heel,  
 Then all join'd in amain;  
 Twenty Pipers ranged in a row,  
 From squinting Shamus to lame Kilcroe,  
 Their cheeks like crimson, began to blow,  
 At the wedding of Shon Maclean.

Till the first faint music began to rise.  
 Like a thousand laverocks singing in tune,  
 Like countless corn-craiks under the moon,  
 Like the smack of kisses, like sweet bells ringing,  
 Like a mermaid's harp, or a kelpie singing,  
 Blew the pipes of Shon; and the witching strain  
 Was the gathering song of the Clan Maclean!

*Then* (no man knows how the thing befell,  
 For none was sober enough to tell)  
 These heavenly Pipers from twenty places  
 Began disputing with crimson faces;  
 Each asserting, like one demented,  
 The claims of the Clan he represented.  
 In vain grey Sandy of Isla strove  
 To soothe their struggle with words of love,  
 Asserting there, like a gentleman,  
 The superior claims of his own great Clan;



Then, finding to reason is despair,  
He seizes his pipes and he plays an air—  
The gathering tune of his Clan—and tries  
To drown in music the shrieks and cries !  
Heavens ! Every Piper, grown mad with ire,  
Seizes his pipes with a fierce desire,  
And blowing madly, with skirl and squeak,  
Begins his particular tune to shriek !  
Up and down the gamut they go,  
Twenty Pipers, all in a row,  
Each with a different strain !  
Each tries hard to drown the first,  
Each blows louder till like to burst.  
Thus were the tunes of the Clans rehearsed  
At the wedding of Shon Maclean !

The small stars twinkled over the heather,  
As the pipers wandered away together,  
But one by one on the journey dropt,  
Clutching his pipes, and there he stopt !  
One by one on the dark hillside  
Each faint blast of the bagpipes died,  
Amid the wind and the rain !  
And the twenty Pipers at break of day  
In twenty different bogholes lay,  
Serenely sleeping upon their way  
From the wedding of Shon Maclean !

Should any man happen to be in doubt as to his being wholly or partly Celtic, let him read the above ballad, and if his heart does not leave the normal in its general conduct, and if he does not itch to be stepping it on the floor, he may write himself down, once and for all, as a Sassenach.

## CHAPTER VIII

### 'THE CITY OF DREAM'

The publication in 1888 of 'The City of Dream,' an epic poem, with a dedication 'to the sainted spirit of John Bunyan,' marks a distinctive place in the poetical history of Mr. Buchanan. Here for the first time, in a manner which has the appearance of a system, he views man and his pilgrimage through the intellectual and moral mazes of the world, in the search for truth. 'I have called "The City of Dream,"' he says, 'an epic poem, using the term in a new and somewhat unfamiliar sense, and believing it applicable to any poetical work which embodies, in a series of grandiose pictures, the intellectual spirit of the age in which it was written. The "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" are the epic, or epoch, poems of the heroic or pagan period; the "De Rerum Natura" is the epic of Roman scepticism and decadence; the "Divine Comedy" is the epic of Roman Catholicism; the "Paradise Lost," that of the epoch known as Protestant; Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" (as surely a poem, although written in prose, as any of those others) is the

epic of English Dissent; while to compare small things with great, "The City of Dream" is an epic of modern Revolt and Reconciliation.'

Even on a superficial study of the poem, it is quite evident that years of thought and speculation must have been spent in its conception and preparation. 'How much has been attempted may be seen in such a section as that of "The Amphitheatre," where an effort is made to adumbrate the entire spirit of Greek poetry and theology.' It is certainly the most ambitious of all the poet's works, and perhaps the most successful as a complete work of art. 'The Drama of Kings' was a notable effort of ambition, but it is neither so complete a study, nor, if the conventional term may be used, is it as true to history. With perhaps a single exception, the record of the heartburnings, doubts, and experiences of the Pilgrim as painted in 'The City of Dream' is drawn on lines which are absolutely faithful to nature and to the various economies and phases which they represent. With the single exception mentioned, there is no attempt at useless over-drawing and exaggeration. Naturally enough, the situations are painted on dramatic lines, for in no other way could the truth be presented in a convincing manner; but the poet, true to the principle on which he has constructed the search of his Pilgrim, allows in nearly every case the conditions with which he seems to have the least sympathy to be developed so as to dramatically represent their most favourable aspect. In no

poem do we find more clear evidence of that power of appealing to Universal Humanity in which, according to Mr. George Henry Lewes, ‘lies Mr. Buchanan’s security. The light of nature is always his guide, the human heart always his study, and the dumb wistful yearning in man to something higher’ is here changed to notes which, however wistful, and however inadequate to express the real condition of the soul, come nearer to the interpretation of the heart-burnings, doubts, and experiences of the sympathetic modern than anything that has been attempted by modern poets, not even excepting Robert Browning.

The argument of this new pilgrimage proceeds thus: One Ishmael, no longer able to bear the tumult and the terror, the tears and the sadness of the city where he dwelt, having heard strange tidings of a Heavenly City, ‘green sited, golden, and with heaven above it,’ soft as the shining of an angel’s hair, ‘where neither comes rain nor wind nor snow, nor the moans of miserable men,’ sets forth to seek the same. He had followed ‘a melancholy neighbour, old and blind, named Faith, led by a beauteous snow-white hound, named Peace,’ and as he fares forth he meets Evangelist, who tells him that the only possible way to reach the Heavenly City is to go blindfold, and when he comes among thorns and flints, ‘to praise God and pray, and when in some deep slough thou flounderest, bless God and struggle through.’ Evangelist blindfolds the

pilgrim Ishmael, leaving sufficient eye-space for him to gaze down upon a Book, which he gives to him; and reading this book, he wanders on, terrified and blindfold, learning the story of the creation, temptation, and degradation of the first man and woman; of the flood; of the history of Abraham and Jacob's race; of King David; of 'pale and wild-eyed kings, the clash of hosts in carnage, and the shriek of haggard prophets standing on the heights.' He meets with, or rather overhears, the protestations and declamation of the old prophet Hurricane, who laughs to scorn those who seek for a sign, and those who speak of rights:

Worms, do ye rave of rights?  
I tell you, He who fashion'd you for pain,  
And set you in a sad and sunless world,  
Scatters your rights as the eternal sea  
Loosens the fading foam-bells from its hair.

He wanders on, 'shadow'd with sorrow, smitten through with sin,' until he comes by chance to the house of one Iconoclast, who relieves him of the bandages covering his eyes. They talk together, Iconoclast calling the Pilgrim a fool, to be led away by the 'fat trencher knave' Evangelist, who had bid him

To turn thy face  
Into the tomb of dead intelligence;  
To quit mortality and be a mole!

He leads him to an eminence, Mount Clear, whence he beholds all the Pilgrims of the World.

And it was noon, noon of a cold grey day,  
A silvern, melancholy light in heaven,  
All calm, the prospects and the distances  
Sharp and distinct to vision, but no sun.

He beholds the City from which he had travelled, and other cities like his own, and coming from each he sees pilgrims toiling to the green slopes on which he stands. Iconoclast speaking, says :

And in each City thou dost look upon  
A different legend and a different God  
Lengthen man's misery and make him mad,

and bids him go back to his city, and work his work, and dream no more of cities in the clouds. But Ishmael, weary of this 'dreary echo of a hollow sound bred in an empty heart,' and spying a Heavenly City 'beyond the scoffer's voice, beyond these vales, beyond the weary wailings of the sea,' leaves him, and as he does so, hears a tumult, in which the tramp of horses' feet and the sharp yelp of hounds are distinctly mingled, seeing directly afterwards a great company of Priests, and hoary crowned Kings and pallid Queens, and countless slaves, pursuing 'In the name of God' a naked man, who saves himself by seeking refuge in a house built by Iconoclast, 'to the glory of God.' He next meets Pitiful, and is directed towards the City of Christopolis. As he goes, he accosts many other pilgrims, journeying to the same city. He reads again in the Book 'a tale so sad and sweet that all the darker matter of the Book dissolved away like mists around a star.' He learns of the Man Divine and his sufferings under the omnipotent and vengeful God, and fears for his own safety, crying, 'How should this God have mercy upon men, seeing He spared not His own anointed son?' He is rebuked for blasphemy

by 'Direful,' high-priest in the Holy City, where is preached God's thunder and the lightnings of the Cross. From Direful he hears the creeds of Christ's Vicars, the popes and priests, and of the doom which awaits those who do not believe. He demands why man merits such a doom; for

That duty the created owes  
To the Creator, the Creator, too,  
Owes the created. God hath given me life;  
I thank my God if life a blessing is;  
How may I bless Him if it proves a curse?

Direful replies, that in the city 'neither words, nor deeds, nor love avail—they are but other names for vanity,' and that only belief is of use, and proceeds to enumerate the main doctrines of the Creed. The Pilgrim leaves Direful and goes towards the City on a roadway strewn with the weary and the miserable.

And every face was lighted with the flame  
Of famine; yea, and all like bloodshot stars  
Shone forward the one way; but ah! the limbs  
Were feeble, and the weary feet were sore,  
And some upon the wayside fell and moan'd,  
And many lay as white and cold as stone  
With thin hands cross'd in prayer upon their rags.  
Meantime there flash'd along on fiery wheels  
Full many a glorious company which bare  
Aloft the crimson Cross, and mighty priests  
Glode by on steeds bridled with glittering gold,  
And delicate wantons on white palfreys pass'd  
With soft eyes downcast as they told their beads,  
And few of these on those who fell and died  
Look'd down, but seem'd with all their spirits bent  
To reach the Golden Gate ere fall of night—  
Only the priests stoop'd sometimes o'er the dead,  
And made the hurried sign o' the Cross, and went.

He passes a ballad-singer on the way, who sings of 'Jesus of Nazareth':

Tomb'd from the heavenly blue,  
Who lies in dreamless death?  
The Jew,  
Jesus of Nazareth!—

and of 'Mary Magdalen':

I saw, in the Holy City, when all the people slept,  
The shape of a woeful woman, who look'd at heaven and wept.

Tall in the moonlit City, pale as some statue of stone,  
With the evil of earth upon her, she stood and she made her  
moan.

In the crowded highways leading to the City with  
'the countless spires like fiery fingers pointing  
up to heaven,' he stands aside to let a glorious  
company pass, meeting Eglantine, who warns  
him that Christopolis is not the City of his quest;  
yet nevertheless he proceeds thither in his new  
friend's company; as they went:

Green were the fields with grass, and sweet with thyme,  
And there were silver runlets everywhere,  
O'er which the willow hung her tassell'd locks,  
And song-birds sang, for it was summer-time,  
And o'er the grass, in green and golden mail,  
The grasshoppers were leaping, and o'erhead  
A lark, pulsating in the warm still air,  
Scatter'd sweet song like dewdrops from her wings.

Eglantine tells the Pilgrim of his own soul's  
story, and of the history of man before civilisation  
and Christianisation were known, 'when man  
drank the free sunshine, hungered, and was fed,  
and knew not superstition or disease,' before the  
Church was formed which 'made that evil which  
was fashioned good and blurs the crystal of  
Eternity.' His own life had been

A crying out for light that hath not shone,  
A sowing of sweet seeds that will not spring,  
A prayer, a tumult, and an ecstasy.



They wander through Christopolis, and see many strange sights there, viewing with surprise and scorn the contrast of profession and conduct, of splendour and squalor, of beauty and of filth. They see a hunt of kings, with bloody priests for hounds, chasing a heretic across the river. Eglantine is charged before the Inquisitor, and asserts in stout words his eclectic belief, concluding thus :

The Everlasting and Imperishable  
Eludes me, as the sight of the sweet stars  
That shine uncomprehended yet serene ;  
For nightly, silently, their eyes uncloze,  
And whoso sees their light, and gazes on it  
Till wonder turns to rapture, seemeth ever,  
Like one that reads all secrets in Love's eyes,  
Swooning upon the verge of certainty—  
Another look, another flash, it seems,  
And all God's mystery will be reveal'd,  
But very silently they close again,  
Shutting their secret 'neath their silvern lids,  
And looking inward with a million orbs  
On the Unfathomable far within  
Their spheres, as is the soul within the soul.  
God is *their* secret ; but I turn to Earth,  
My Mother, and in her dark fond face I gaze,  
Still questioning until at last I find  
*Her* secret, and its sweetest name is Love :  
And this one word she murmurs secretly  
Into the ears of birds and beasts and men ;  
And sometimes, listening to her, as she lies  
Twining her lilies in her hair, and watching  
Her blind eyes as they glimmer up to heaven,  
I dream this word she whispers to herself  
Is yet another mystic name of God.

He is denounced and condemned as an Atheist, and Ishmael, sympathising, shares the same fate, and takes refuge beyond a great gate dividing the City into two parts. Wise men accost him

and warn him that peace and assurance are to be found only in the Book given him by Evangelist; but this in his perversity he denies, and casting away the Book, is again denounced as unbelieving, Ishmael declaring that the only Book he reads was

God's in the beginning ; on its front  
He set the stars for signs, the sun for seal ;  
Golden the letters, bright the shining pages,  
Holy the natural gospel of the earth ;  
Blessèd tenfold the language of that Book  
For ever open ; blessèd he who reads  
The leaf that ever blossoms ever turn'd !

and he is driven out of the City into the dreary region beyond. He meets there one Merciful, and with him, at the feet of the Calvaries, holds converse, in the midst of which he tells of those who, in the hours of darkness, crawl to the feet of the Cross, and in the hours of light and success live godless and bloody lives :

Such conscience is an owl that flies by night ;  
No sweet white dove that moves abroad by day.

And yet I know, by every breath I breathe,  
The Mighty and the Merciful are one :  
The morning dew that scarcely bends the flowers,  
Inhaled to heaven becomes the lightning flash  
That lights all heaven ere noon.

The Pilgrim, declining to kneel to the shapes of stone, is told by Merciful that he will never escape the shadow :

On the desert sands,  
On the sad shores of the sea, upon the scroll  
Of the star-printed heavens, on every flower  
That blossoms, on each thing that flies or creeps  
'Tis made—the sign is made, the Cross is made—  
That cipher which whoever reads can read  
The riddle of the worlds.

He muses on these sayings, and foresees the destiny laid out for mankind :

To each thing that lives  
Is given, without a choice, this destiny—  
To be a slayer or a sufferer,  
A tyrant or a martyr ; to be weak  
Or cruel ; to range Nature like a hawk,  
Or fall in cruel talons like a dove.

Flying on, he knows not whither, he encounters rain and tempest, and takes shelter in a woeful Wayside Inn, where he meets the Outcasts of all the creeds—Despair, Isaac, Deadheart, Wormwood, and others. In this dreary company he discusses the problems that haunt his soul, and, leaving them, wanders through the night and encounters a wild horseman, Esau, who carries him over the Hills on a horse 'maned like a comet, and as black as clouds that blot a comet's path'; and as they fly through the night past rocks, and crags, and peaks, and gaunt ravines, he cries, 'Whither, O whither?' and the answer comes 'in a wild strange song, to which the sobbing of the torrents, the moaning of the wind, and the beating of the horse's thunderous feet, kept strange accord':

Winds of the mountain, mingle with my crying,  
Clouds of the tempest, flee as I am flying,  
Gods of the clondland, Christus and Apollo,  
Follow, O follow !

Through the dark valleys, up the misty mountains,  
Over the black wastes, past the gleaming fountains,  
Praying not, hoping not, resting nor abiding,  
Lo, I am riding !

. . . . .

Clangour and anger of elements are round me,  
Torture has clasp'd me, cruelty has crown'd me,  
Sorrow awaits me, Death is waiting with her—  
Fast speed I thither !

Not 'neath the greenwood, not where roses blossom,  
Not on the green vale on a loving bosom,  
Not on the sea-sands, not across the billow,  
Seek I a pillow !

Gods let them follow !—gods, for I defy them !  
They call me, mock me ; but I gallop by them—  
If they would find me, touch me, whisper to me,  
Let them pursue me !

Faster, O faster ! Darker and more dreary  
Groweth the pathway, yet I am not weary—  
Gods, I defy them ! gods, I can unmake them,  
Bruise them and break them !

White steed of wonder, with thy feet of thunder,  
Find out their temples, tread their high-priests under,—  
Leave them behind thee—if their gods speed after,  
Mock them with laughter.

Shall a god grieve me ? shall a phantom win me ?  
Nay—by the wild wind around and o'er and in me—  
Be his name Vishnu, Christus, or Apollo—  
Let the god follow !

Esau carries him to the Groves of Faun, saying :

And here thy soul  
May rest a space and worship at its will  
Whatever god thou chooseth, or indeed,  
May make an idol of its own despair,  
And kneeling, pray to *that* !

Esau holds out to the Pilgrim the satisfaction  
both to the soul and body of such a life as he  
leads, to whom, after thought, the Pilgrim replies :

Yea, there is wisdom in thy words—  
Better to wander up and down the world  
All outcast, or in Nature's stormy fanes  
To pray in protestation and despair,

Than in Christopolis with priests and slaves  
 To gnaw the frozen crust of a cold creed  
 Amid the brazen glory of a lie.

'Yea,' says Esau :

'Better to be the weariest wave that breaks  
 Moaning and dying on Thought's shoreless sea,  
 Than the supremest blossom born i' the wood,  
 And like a snow-flake shed upon the ground !'

The Groves of Faun are watched over by the Shepherd Thyrsis and his child, a maid of surpassing beauty. Led by Thyrsis, he sees the Vales of Vain delight, and after drinking of the waters of oblivion, beholds the living apparition of the Greek god Eros.

Suiting the poetical expression to the environment conceived, the poet finds himself for the next fifty pages bathed in an atmosphere of colour. The rigidity of thought and the stern intellectualism which bathe the environments of the previous encounters, find their substitutes in scenes of purple sensuous lights which are a fitting accompaniment of the Pagan atmosphere which we are made to breathe. In the vales of vain delight we hear sung the one song of passion that the epic contains. Here, where 'pale youths and students Time had snow'd upon ; gaunt poets, clasping to the cold breast-bones their harps of gold ; and hunters, gross-mouth'd and lewd ; and kings, that proffered crowns for one cold kiss,' the song is sung :

Kiss, dream, and die ! love, let thy lips divine  
 In one long heavenly kiss be seal'd to mine,  
 While singing low the flower-crown'd Hours steal by—

Thy beauty warms my blood like wondrous wine—  
While yet the sun hangs still in yonder sky,  
Kiss, dream, and die !

Kiss, dream, and die !—Love, after life comes Death,  
No spirit to rapture reawakeneth  
When once Love's sun hath sunk in yonder sky—  
Cling closer, drink my being, draw my breath,—  
Soul answering soul, in one long rapturous sigh,  
Kiss, dream, and die !

Despite the splendid spiritualisation and intellectualism of the rest of the book, there is no doubt that, in the gorgeous imagery of the Pagan period of the Epic, the poet is at his white heat of inspiration. In dazzling contrast to the gloom and sadness, introspection and heart-searching, of the time when the poet treads the path with the newer gods, is this kaleidoscope of fiery imagery, this ever-coloured picture of the pasture-lands and hunting-grounds of the older gods. Satyrs, Nymphs, and Fauns fill up the intervals between the moments when the gods front the picture, and all the world is one continued song of irresponsible mirth, dreaminess, and indolence. The Pilgrim, like one who sleeps, tottered heavy-eyed through woods of poppy and rank hellebore. ‘In vain ripe fruits were crush'd against his lips, in vain the branches with their blossom'd arms entwined around him; vainly in his face the naked dryad and the wood-nymph laughed’—his goal was not in slumbersome Ennui; his was to find the final answer to the soul's great question, and it certainly was not to be found there.

By his side walked the old shepherd and his daughter.

Her face was bright  
As sunlight, but her lips were poppy-red,  
And o'er her brows and alabaster limbs,  
The lilies and the roses interblent  
In that full glory. Raven-black her hair,  
And black her brow o'er azure eyes that swam  
With passionate and never-ceasing fires,  
Deep hidden 'neath her snows ; most brilliantly  
They burnt, but with no trembling, fitful light,  
Nay, rather, steady as two vestal fires,  
And though their flame was passionately bright,  
Soul-trancing, soul-consuming, yet it seem'd  
Most virginal and sweetly terrible,  
Chaste with the splendour of an appetite  
That never could be fed on food of earth,  
Or stoop to quench its chastity with less  
Than perfect godhead.

This perfect godhead in the maid's eyes is the god Eros, who reveals himself walking 'like a slow star sailing through the clouds of twilight, and gliding in the glory of a dream,' and to whom the Pilgrim is introduced as one 'from the dusty tracts of Time, and a seeker of the secret Beautiful no ear hath heard.'

The Pilgrim sails with Eros over strange waters:

Then was I 'ware that underneath me throb'd  
Strange vistas, dim and wonderful, wherein  
The great ghost of the burning sun did shine  
Subdued and dim, amid a heaven as blue,  
As blue and deep, as that which burnt o'erhead ;  
And in the under-void like gold-fish gleam'd  
Innumerable Spirits of the lake,  
Naked, blown hither and thither light as leaves,  
With lilies in their hands, their eyes half closed,  
Their hair like drifting weeds ; thick as the flowers  
Above, they floated ; near the surface some,  
And others far away as films of cloud

In that deep under-heaven ; but all their eyes  
Were softly upturn'd, as unto some strange star,  
To him who in the shallop's glittering wake  
Swam 'mid the light of his lone loveliness.

Then all grew dim ! I closed my heated eyes,  
Like one who on a summer hill lies down  
Face upward, blinded by the burning blue,  
And in my ears there grew a dreamy hum  
Of lark-like song. The heaven above my head,  
The heaven below my feet, swam swiftly by,  
Till clouds and birds and flowers and water-elves  
Were blent to one bright flash of rainbow light  
Bewildering the sense. And now I swam  
By jewell'd islands smother'd deep in flowers  
Glassily mirror'd in the golden river ;  
And from the isles blue-plumaged warblers humm'd,  
Swinging to boughs of purple, yellow, and green,  
Their pendent nests of down ; and on the banks,  
Dim-shaded by the umbrage and the flowers,  
Sat naked fauns who fluted to the swans  
On pipes of reeds, while in the purple shallows,  
Wading knee-deep, listen'd the golden cranes,  
And walking upon floating lotus-leaves  
The red jacana scream'd.

As they sail, he holds converse with the god,  
who, seeing the Pilgrim gazing on these scenes  
which are as hollow as a pleasure snatched in  
sleep, murmurs :

Fly from thy dream,  
And it shall last for ever ; cherish it,  
And it shall wither in thy cherishing !

And thus they glided on :

The wonder deepen'd. Earth and Heaven seem'd blent  
In one still rapture, for their beating hearts  
Were prest like breasts of lovers, close together ;

until they come, betimes, to an amphitheatre  
among mountains, where he finds pilgrims like  
unto himself, seeking the solution of the Eternal



mystery. Amongst other visions he has one of Silenos :

For of much peace he told, of golden fields,  
Of shepherds in dim dales Arcadian,  
Of gods that gather'd the still stars like sheep  
Dawn after dawn to shut them in their folds  
And every dawn did loose them once again,  
Of vintage and of fruitage, and of Love's  
Ripe kisses stolen in the reaping time ;

and a gorgeous spectacle of the 'ripe rose of womanhood supreme,' Helena, 'more fair than Cytherea rising from the sea or seated naked on the lover's star, strewing the seas beneath her silvern feet with pearls and emeralds all a summer night.'

After that miracle of womanhood come Argos, Clytemnestra, Ida, Cassandra, Agamemnon, Iphigenia, Orestes, Eteokles, Œdipus, and the Eumenides :

' As the innumerable waves  
Sink after tempest to completest calm,  
For surcease of the mighty tumult pass'd,  
So these wild waifs of being grow subdued  
To subtle music of sublime despairs ;  
For out of wrath comes love, and out of pain  
Dumb resignation brooding like a dove,  
On sunless waters, and of unbelief  
Is born a faith more precious and divine  
Than e'er blind Ignorance with his mother's milk  
Suck'd smiling down !

And then :

As he spake,  
There came a twittering as of birds on boughs,  
A music as of rain pattering on leaves ;  
And to this murmur the great curtain fell,  
Revealing slopes of greenest emerald  
By shallow rivulets fed with flashing falls,  
And far away soft throbb'd the evening star,  
And everywhere across those pastures sweet  
Moved Lambs as white as snow ! Then as I gazed  
I heard Apollo singing on the heights  
A shepherd's song divine.

And following Apollo, the daughter of Colonos, Alcestis, 'pallid from the kiss of Death'; the daughters of Danaos, and the seed of Epaphos and Io, and the fair Heifer's self, 'as white as snow, star-vision'd, woman-faced, miraculous,' and then, 'with all the still cold heaven above his head,' a vision of Prometheus Purkaieus. The Pilgrim witnesses the sacrificial tragedy of Cheiron, and the transubstantiation of Eros—transfigured before the Man Divine, on the cross of wood.

Hastening from the amphitheatre, he passes through the Valley of Dead Gods, seeing in despair 'the empty thrones of heaven,' and wheresoe'er he trod, the earth was still torn open into graves.

Then methought,  
While Heaven and Hell moan'd answer to each other,  
And throngs of gods like wolves around a fire  
Gather'd, and earth as far as eye could see  
Was one wild sea of open graves, that broke  
To foam of dead shapes shining in their shrouds,  
I heard a voice out of the darkness calling  
And weary voices answering as it sang:—

Black is the night, but blacker my despair;  
The world is dark—I walk I know not where;  
Yet phantoms beckon still, and I pursue—  
Phantoms, still phantoms! there they loom—and there!  
Adonai! Lord! art thou a Phantom, too?

One strikes—before the blow I bend full weak;  
One beckoning smiles, but fades in act to speak;  
One with a clammy touch doth chill me thro'—  
See! they join hands in circle, while I shriek,  
Adonai! Lord! art thou a Phantom, too?

Dark and gigantic, one, with crimson hands  
Upstretch'd in protestation, frowning stands,  
While tears like blood his night-black cheeks bedew—  
He tears his hair, he sinks in shifting sands—  
Adonai! Lord! art thou a Phantom, too?

The sad, the glad, the hideous, and the bright,  
 The kings of darkness, and the lords of light,  
 The shapes I loved, the forms whose wrath I flew,  
 Now wall together in eternal night—  
 Adonai ! Lord ! art thou a Phantom, too ?

As he passes through the Valley, he finds his townsman Faith lying dead and cold. Yet the Pilgrim dies not, but, 'sadder than night, and sunless as the grave,' finds himself on a wan wayside, close to a rain-worn Cross, 'watching the crimson eyeballs of the dawn,' and holds speech with Sylvan, whom leaving, he climbs again upward among mountains, and shelters with the Hermit of the Mere. Thereon, one Nightshade leads him up the highest peaks :

The crags and rocks and air-hung precipices  
 Redden in sunset, and above the peaks,  
 Upon a bed of crimson, dusky gleam'd  
 The argent sickle of the beamless morn ;  
 And lo, the winds had fallen and curl'd themselves  
 Like tired-out hounds in hollows of the hills,  
 Restlessly sleeping but from time to time  
 Audibly breathing ; and deep stillness lay  
 Upon the mountains and the darkening slopes  
 Beneath their snows, and the low far-off moan  
 Of torrents deepening that stillness came  
 From the untrodden heights ;

and shows him the Spectre of the Inconceivable, after which sight of wonder he finds himself worn and old, but emerges in full daylight on the open way.

The rosy hand of Dawn closed softly o'er  
 One fluttering moth-like star.

Once more above  
 The radiant rose of heaven openeth,  
 Petal by petal, glimmering in the dew.

O bright the morning came, as brightly shining

Upon the trembling murderer's raised hair  
As on the little clenched hand of the babe  
Smiling in sleep ! softly the white clouds sail'd,  
Edged with vermillion, to the east ; the mists  
Rose like white altar-smoke from that green vale,  
The forests stirr'd with numerous leafy gleams,  
The birch unbound her shining hair, the oak  
Shone in his tawny mail, and from the wood  
The brook sprang laughing ; and above the fields  
The lark rose, singing that same song it sang  
On Adam's nuptial morn !

On the open way he first holds parley with Literal, 'who smiled calm greeting, such as fellow-scholars give half-absently, when pacing slow within the groves of Academe,' the talk being in the grooves of philosophy, in which is contrasted the cold academic mind of Literal and the 'extra-mural' enthusiasm of the Pilgrim. Literal advises the Pilgrim to leave the riddle of the gods, and quench his sad desire in blessed toil ; but the Pilgrim, seeing in him 'the sexton of the creeds—a cold and humorous knave, with never a guess beyond his spade, and the cold skull it strikes in digging his own grave,' bids him farewell, and leaves the pallid scholar far behind. On every side he meets 'the drowsy stare of bovine human faces, and hears the hum of hollow human voices,' until he accosts a student, 'smiling softly, with the studied scorn of perfect courtesy,' Microcos by name, another disbeliever in God. After talk with him he meets with a gentle stranger, by whom he is guided to the gates of the City builded without God, a beautiful city, constructed and governed on the lines of the latest conceptions and experiences of scientific man—

where the name of God is never mentioned, where  
no spirit is known except the spirit of man.

Down every street  
A cooling rivulet ran, and in the squares  
Bright fountains sparkled ; and where'er I walk'd  
The library, the gymnasium, and the bath  
Were open to the sun ; virgins and youths  
Swung in the golden air like wingèd things,  
Or in the crystal waters plunged and swam,  
Or raced with oiled limbs from goal to goal ;  
And in the hush'd and shadowy libraries,  
Or in the galleries of painted art,  
Or in the dusk museum, neophytes  
Walk'd undisturb'd, and never sound of war,  
Clarion or trumpet, cry of Priest or King,  
Came to disturb the City's summer peace ;  
And never a sick face made the sunlight sad,  
And never a blind face hunger'd for the light,  
And never a form that was not strong and fair  
Walk'd in the brightness of those golden streets.

His weary wanderings and experiences in this city, 'latest and fairest of any built by Man,' are detailed. How he grew heart-sick at the life that was governed by mathematics and machinery, how his soul is stirred to anger by the priests of the laboratories whose ready methods to destroy the infirm and frail infants, and whose vivisection experiments, his soul protests against. A time comes when, sickened and afraid, he forsakes the city and flees on into the region of Monsters and strange births of Time. At last, in the winter of his pilgrimage, he beholds the old man 'Masterful,' who becomes his guide to the brink of the Celestial Ocean. Lone on the heights they stand, while the daylight fades,

While the hand of Night  
Hung closed a moment o'er the rayless snows,  
Then open'd suddenly, and from its grasp  
Loosen'd one lustrous star !

Then with reverent eyes upgazing, and upon his  
pallid face light falling faintly from a million  
worlds, the old man spoke :

Thou seekest God—behold thou standest now  
Within His Temple. Lo, how brilliantly  
The Altar, fed with ceaseless starry fires,  
Burns, for its footstool is the mountain-peaks,  
The skies its star-enwoven panoply !—  
Lo, then, how silently, how mystically,  
Yonder unsullied Moon uplifts the Host,  
While from the continents and seas beneath,  
And from the planets that bow down as lambs,  
And from the constellations clustering  
With eyes of wonder upon every side,  
Rises the murmur which Creation heard  
In the beginning ! Harken ! Strain thine ears !  
Are they so thick with dust they cannot hear  
The plagal cadence of the instrument  
Set in the veiled centre of the Shrine ?

Standing on those mysterious shores, the highest  
peak of earth, he sees a ship of Souls, and 'lo,  
methought these spirits of men and women which  
seemed to float before him sang in piteous human  
tones, which found an echo in the Pilgrim's soul,  
this song :

Unseen, Unknown, yet seen and known  
By the still soul that broods alone  
On visions eyesight cannot see,  
By that, thy seed within me sown,  
Forget not me !

Forget me not, but hear me cry,  
Ere in my lonely bed I lie,  
Thus stooping low on bended knee,  
And if in glooms of sleep I die,  
Forget not me !

Forget me not as men forget,  
But let thy light be with me yet  
Where'er my vagrant footsteps flee,  
Until my earthly sun is set,  
Forget not me !

## ROBERT BUCHANAN

Though dumb thou broodest far away,  
Beyond the night, beyond the day,  
Across the great celestial Sea,  
Forget me not, but hear me pray  
‘Forget not me !’

By the long path that I have trod,  
The sunless tracks, the shining road,  
From forms of dread to forms of thee,  
By all my dumb despairs, O God,  
Forget not me !

Forget not when mine eyelids close,  
And sinking to my last repose,  
All round the sleeping dead I see,  
Yea, when I sleep as sound as those,  
Forget not me !

Though deeper than the deepest Deep  
Be the dark void wherein I sleep,  
Though ocean-deep I buried be,  
I charge thee, by these tears I weep,  
Forget not me !

Remember, Lord, my lifelong quest,  
How painfully my soul hath prest  
From dark to light, pursuing Thee ;  
So, though I fall and sink to rest,  
Forget not me !

Say not ‘He sleeps—he doth forget  
All that he sought with eyes tear-wet—  
‘Tis o’er—he slumbers—let him be !’  
Though I forget, remember yet—  
Forget not me !

Forget me not, but come, O King,  
And find me softly slumbering  
In dark and troubled dreams of Thee—  
Then, with one waft of Thy bright wing,  
Awaken me !

And as the ship vanishes in the cerulean haze,  
the Pilgrim awakens, and knows that all he has  
seen—yea, all his spirit’s lifelong quest—has been  
only a Dream within a Dream.

There is so much elaboration of the scenery against which move the various characters in the epic, there is so much detail in the various movements of the characters, that it has been impossible to give anything but the vaguest idea of the scope and general significance of the poem. The particular grandeur, and the poetic success achieved in such a chapter as ‘The Amphitheatre,’ have led us in fact to treat that portion of the epic in the most cursory manner, as any attempt to indicate its strength and beauty could only have ended in dismal failure. All we have attempted is to place on record the numerous paths taken by the Pilgrim in his wanderings, and to suggest the various environments and different philosophic standpoints that came in his way, in his long and weary question for some solution of the Eternal mysteries. It will be seen that the poet remains absolutely true to experience, in that whatsoever circumstances and surroundings the Pilgrim is placed, he never loses what, after all, is the most clinging and the most important environment, that of his own tendencies, his own fears, passions, and prejudices.

For the form and style of the work the poet owes no apology. It illustrates once more the theory of poetical expression that has guided him throughout his career: ‘the theory that the end and crown of Art is simplicity, and that words, where they only conceal thoughts, are the veriest weeds, to be cut remorselessly away.’ Without troubling ourselves much with the critical



appreciation and depreciation that met the work at its publication, we may be allowed to quote Mr. Lecky's words spoken at the Royal Academy. 'The illustrious historian of the Crimean War (Kinglake) has completed his noble historic gallery. And if it be said that this great master of picturesque English was reared in the traditions of a more artistic age, I would venture to point to a poem which is destined to take a prominent place in the literature of our time. I refer to "The City of Dream," by Robert Buchanan. While such works are produced in England, it cannot, I think, be said that the artistic spirit in English literature has very seriously decayed.'

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## CHAPTER IX

### 'THE WANDERING JEW'<sup>1</sup> AND 'THE BALLAD OF MARY THE MOTHER'

'The Wandering Jew,' published in 1893, although called by the poet a Christmas Carol, yet may in reality be considered the epic poem, to which 'The Book of Orm,' published more than twenty years previously, may be counted the prelude; in fact, to those interested in the history of this poem, it may be mentioned that 'The Book of Orm' has as its sub-title 'a Prelude to the Epic,' and that in the first edition, published in 1870, an advertisement appears, having relation to the epic poem, in which the very lines which serve to preface 'The Wandering Jew' are given :

Come Faith, with eyes of patient heavenward gaze !  
Come Hope, with feet that bleed from thorny ways !  
With hand for each, leading those twain to me,  
Come with thy gifts of grace, fair Charity !  
Bring music too, whose voices trouble so  
Our very footfalls as we graveward go,  
Whose bright eyes, as she sings to Humankind,  
Shine with the glory of God which keeps them blind.

In the volume published in 1893 are added some further lines, of which the following may be quoted :

Come, muses of the bleeding heart of Man,  
Fairer than all the Nine Parnassæan,

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<sup>1</sup> Quotations by kind permission of Messrs. Chatto and Windus.

Fairer and clad in grace more heavenly  
Than those sweet visions of Man's Infancy,  
Come from your lonely heights with song and prayer,  
To inspire an epic of the world's despair !

. . . . .

To prove that Light Divine is never sought in vain.

In a note to the second edition of the poem, Mr. Buchanan says : ' I wished to appeal to those with whom Religion, real Religion, is an eternal verity. My poem was neither for the Pharisee who follows Jesus amongst the formulas of theology, nor for the Sadducee who interprets him through the letter of literature. It was meant to picture the absolute and simple truth as I see it, the presence in the world of a supreme and suffering Spirit who has been, and is outcast from all human habitations, and most of all from the Churches built in his Name. It is not a polemic against Jesus of Nazareth ; it is an expression of love for his personality, and of sympathy with his unrealised Dream. . . . He survives and will survive as a Divine Ideal, a pathetic Figure, searching Heaven in vain for a sign, for a token that he has not failed. . . . He is asking himself, after eighteen hundred years of weary effort, the terrible question which I have put into his mouth : " After all, are men worth saving ? " The only affirmative answer to that question would be the existence in the world of Christ-like men. When human beings really begin to love one another, when War and Prostitution have left the earth, when the wicked no longer reign, when the selfish and base cease

to flourish and the poor cease to starve and die, when Woman emerges from her long degradation and Man ceases to be her willing slave, the Christ may answer "Yes." Then perhaps the God whom he now seeks vainly may vouchsafe him a sign, and so enable him to fulfil his beautiful promise; but till then, he will wander on, as he wanders on now, in spiritual weakness and despair.'

As our work is with Mr. Buchanan alone, and not with his critics, with whom we have at times been associated, it will be unnecessary for us to enter into any lengthy consideration of that remarkable controversy which 'turned the head' of the Press, especially the English Metropolitan Press, at the time of the publication of these poems. 'Major and minor' *littérateurs*, log-rollers, priests, pedants and prigs, would-be satirists and heartburning Socialists joined in the affirmation and denial of the question phrased in a sporting key, 'Is Christianity played out?' Men, long encumbered by the tyranny of environment and habit, broke their bonds and spoke as they never spoke before. The eclectic spirit was rampant; and even the Church itself, humble perhaps before the terrible indictment of the poet, drank in a temporary draught of eclecticism.

In one of a series of letters to the 'Daily Chronicle,' Mr. Buchanan further elaborated his position in reference to the spirit and object of his poem. 'I distinguish absolutely,' he said, 'between the character of Jesus and the character of Christianity—in other words, between Jesus of

Nazareth and Jesus the Christ. Shorn of all supernatural pretensions, Jesus emerges from the gross mass of human beings as an almost perfect type of simplicity, veracity, and natural affection. "Love one another" was the Alpha and Omega of his teaching, and he carried out the precept through every hour of his too brief life. Then, looking round on his fellows, realising the extent of human misery and perceiving the follies of human existence, he thought, "Surely there must be some Divine solution to the problem. Surely there must be another and a fairer life to justify a life so ephemeral." Therein he was right; without some such justification this life of ours is only dust and ashes. But with his insight began his sorrow. He turned from this world as from something, in its very nature, base and detestable. He conceived the soul as removed altogether from the necessities and privileges of the flesh. . . . He dreamed of a Divine kingdom where every riddle would be solved, the wicked would cease from troubling and the weary would be at rest; but in so doing, he forgot that the Divine kingdom, if it is to exist at all, must begin where God first localised it on this planet. The whole thesis of my poem, then, is this, that the Spirit of Jesus, surviving on into the present generation, still stands apart from the strife and tumult of the human race; and, most of all, from Christianity. In my arraignment of Jesus before humanity, I have not feared to state the whole case as conceived by men against him, to chronicle

the endless enormities committed in his name. . . . The whole aim of the work is to justify Jesus against the folly, the cruelty, the infamy, the ignorance of the Creed upbuilt above his grave. I show, in cipher as it were, that those who crucified him once would crucify him again, were he to return amongst us. I imply that among the first to crucify him would be the members of his own Church. But nowhere do I imply that his soul, in its purely personal elements, in its tender and sympathising humanity, was not the very divinest that ever wore earth above it. He judged men far too gently, he was far too sanguine about human perfectibility.

'According to my critics, it is secularism, not Christianity, which is played out "intellectually." If they mean by secularism the base and irreverent spirit which gibes and mocks at the beautiful dream of Jesus, and in so doing defames the stainless elder brother of all suffering men, I am cordially at one with them; but if they mean by secularism the spirit which rejects all compromises and frauds, however innocent, which affirms that the business of humanity is not to wear sackcloth and ashes, but to enlarge the area of its own happiness, and which incidentally, by way of illustration, points out the evils that other-worldliness has brought on man, I take leave to say, that at no time in the world's history has secularism exercised so benign an influence over the lives of all who think and feel. It is secularism that is hastening on the cause of moral and

intellectual freedom in every land, spreading abroad the good news that science is beginning to formulate the laws of life, asserting in the face of all selfish institutions that human nature has a right not merely to its daily bread, but to its daily love and joy. It is only in so far as Christianity is itself secular that it is of the slightest influence upon the age in which we live. Personally I can find no words too strong to express my admiration of those "Christians" who are devoting themselves to charitable work among the poor, ministering tenderly to the needs of their suffering brethren, going forth (like Father Damien) to face disease and death itself at the call of religious duty. But these men are sacrificing themselves, not because they are Christians but because, like Jesus, they are practically indifferent to all dogmatic creeds. They take the name, and wear the livery, of the Christian Church, but they are in reality secularists of the highest and noblest type.

'There is nothing, I think, which so amazes a dispassionate observer of human progress as the feats of moral legerdemain of which Christianity, so-called, is capable. Its history is one of endless cruelties and countless horrors. Its constant effect has been to paralyse human activity, and to pervert every beautiful human instinct. Its teachers and preachers have been from age to age the enemies of human thought. Yet on the score of the beautiful words spoken by its founder, Christianity has, with overmastering arrogance, claimed for itself every great moral

victory that men have achieved. As well might it be claimed, on the score of the almost equally beautiful words of Pagan philosophers, that the victories of civilisation have been achieved by Paganism. . . .

'Well, the dream of Jesus was of God, and so is ours. That it will be realised somehow and somewhere is my living faith. Nothing beautiful or true can perish, and this world would be a charnel-house if eternal death were possible. But Christ, the supreme sufferer, must admit at last that suffering is not Godhead, that the fountain of life cannot be one of tears; in a word, he must add to his endless transformation the transformation into the supreme secularist cognisant of all the necessities and realities of existence. He has already, in conjunction with Buddha, with Socrates, and with Seneca, ay, with Walt Whitman, shown a decisive insight into the possibilities of human self-sacrifice and human affection. . . . I have granted that the creed of Christendom is not the creed of Christ, that Christ himself would have shuddered—nay, does shudder—at the abominations committed century after century in his name. But it is because the nebulae of his love never cohered to an orb of rational polity; because mere sentiment can never save man till it changes into a science of life; because if this world is not something joyful and beautiful, all other worlds are dismal delusions, that Christ's message to humanity has been spoken in vain. Human love and self-respect, human science and



verification, human perception of the limitation of knowledge, have done more in half a century to justify God and prove the Godliness of life, than the doctrine of other-worldliness has done in nineteen hundred years.'

The poem opens in London, where the poet is wandering late in the City's streets, sick at heart and chill, when he hears a feeble voice at his side crying in hollow human accents, 'For God's sake, mortal, let me lean on thee!' and 'a thin hand crept into mine own, clammy and cold as clay.' It is Christmas Eve, snow had just ceased falling, and the poet's musings were on life and death, and on God and man; and thinking of 'the blinded herd who eat the dust and ashes of the Word, of the vanity of Christ's death to save the world and to vanquish Death, and of his now rising again,' he cries:

The golden dream is o'er,  
And he whom Death has conquered wakes no more.

He becomes aware of the presence of one with 'reverend silver beard and hair snow-white and sorrowful,' and he hears again the tremulous voice. He implores the ancient wight to lean on him, and as he does so, asks from whence he comes and whither he goes:

Thereon, with deep-drawn breath and dull, dumb stare,  
'Far have I travelled, and the night is cold,'  
He murmur'd, adding feebly, 'I am old.'  
He spake like one whose wits are wandering,  
And strange his accents were, and seem'd to bring  
The sense of some strange region far away,

And like a caged Lion gaunt and gray  
Who, looking thro' the bars, all woe-begone,  
Beholdeth not the men he looketh on,  
But gazeth thro' them on some lonely pool  
Far in the desert, whither he crept to cool  
His sunburnt loins and drink when strong and free,  
Ev'n so with dull dumb stare he gazed thro' me  
On some far bourne.

He is full of pity for the man, with his heavy snow of years, the furrow'd cheeks, his wintry eyes, and his hand 'dank as the drown'd dead,' who is hungry and athirst, and has no place to rest his head. Across the sight of the poet flashes 'a glamour of the Sleepers of the Night,' 'the sweet sleep of little children, the sleep of dainty ladies, and of beggarmen':

These visions came and went, each gleaming clear  
Yet spectral, in the act to disappear;  
I mark'd the long streets empty to the sky,  
And every dim square window was an eye  
That gazing dimly inward saw within  
Some hidden mystery of shame or sin,—  
Lovebed and deathbed, raggedness and wealth,  
Pale Murder, tiptoe, creeping on in stealth  
With sharp uplifted knife, or haggard Lust  
Mouthing his stolen fruit of tasteless dust.

The poet offers the weary man his humble hospitality; and as they go together, they pass the mighty Abbey:

And suddenly that old Man cried aloud,  
Lifting his weary face and woe-begone  
Up to the painted window-panes that shone  
With frosty glimmers, 'Open, O thou Priest  
Who waitest in the Temple!' As he ceased,  
The fretted arches echoed to the cry,  
And with a shriek the wintry wind went by  
And died in silence.

A frozen smoke of incense that did creep  
From Life's deserted Altar

is hung over the city :

The pulses of its heart scarce felt to beat,  
Calm as a corpee, the snow its winding-sheet,  
The sky its pall' ;

and the poet passes on with the old man weary  
and footsore, questioning him as to his kindred,  
his name, his place of birth. In answer to which  
the old man cries :

' For ever at the door of Death  
Faintly I knocked, and when it openeth  
Would fain creep in, but ever a Hand snow-cold  
Thrusteth me back into the open wold,  
And ever a voice intones early and late  
" Until thy work is done, remain and wait !"  
And century after century I have trod  
The infinitely weary glooms of God,  
And lo ! the Winter of mine age is here !'

And as he stands there, 'the consecration of a  
vast despair,' the poet deems him 'Ahasuerus,  
the Wandering Jew.' Then the soul of the poet  
almost bursts in pity for him who cannot die :

Death is the one good thing beneath the sky,  
Death is the one sweet thing that men may see.  
.....  
Yes, Death is best, and yet I cannot die.

A Glamour of the Dead passes before the poet's  
vision ; the dead in the field of battle, the dead  
'in the great graveyard strewn with moonbeams  
chill like bleaching shrouds,' and the dead at  
the 'oozy bottom of the Sunless Sea' ; while the  
Jew prays :

'Father which art in Heaven,' the old Man said,  
 'Thou from the holy shelter of whose wing  
 I came an innocent and shining thing,  
 A lily in my hand, and in mine eyes,  
 The passion and the peace of Paradise,  
 Thou who didst drop me gently down to rest  
 A little while upon my Mother's breast,  
 Wrapt in the raiment of a mortal birth,  
 How long, how long, across thy stricken Earth  
 Must I fare onward, deathless?'

Soon after this the poet sees the bloody stigmata of the Cross, and discerns that this is not Ahasuerus but 'that diviner Jew, who like a Phantom passeth everywhere, the World's last hope and bitterest despair. Deathless, yet dead.' Recovering from the swoon into which this revelation has thrown him, the poet gazes up, 'blinking his eyes for dread of some new brightness.' The Man Forlorn smiles 'even as a Father looking on a child':

Ay me! the sorrow of that smile! 'Twas such  
 As singer ne'er may sing or pencil touch!—  
 But ye who have seen the light that is in snow,  
 The glimmer on the heights where sad and slow  
 Some happy day is dying—ye who have seen  
 Strange dawns and moonlit waters, woodlands green  
 Troubled with their own beauty; think of these,  
 And of all other tender images,  
 Then think of some beloved face asleep  
 'Mid the dark pathos of the grave, blend deep  
 Its beauty with all those until ye weep,  
 And ye may partly guess the woe divine  
 Wherewith that Face was looking down on mine.

The poet falters :

Lord of Life, hast thou arisen?  
 . . . . .  
 Arisen! Arisen! Arisen!

At the word

The silent cisterns of the Night were stirred  
 And plashed with troublous waters, and in the sky,  
 The pale stars clung together, while the cry  
 Was wafted on the wind from street to street !  
 Like to a dreaming man whose heart doth beat  
 With thick pulsations, while he fights to break  
 The load of terror with a shriek and wake,  
 The sleeping City trembled thro' and thro' ;  
 And in its darkness, open'd to my view  
 As by enchantment, those who slumbered  
 Rose from their pillows, listening in dread,  
 And out of soot-black windows faces white  
 Gleamed ghost-like, peering forth into the night ;  
 And haggard women by the River dark,  
 Crawling to plunge and drown, stood still to hear ;  
 And in the silent shrouded Hospitals,  
 Where the dim night-lamp flickering on the walls  
 Made woeful shadows, men who dying lay,  
 Picking the coverlit as they pass'd away  
 And babbling babe-like, raised their heads to hear,  
 While all their darkening sense again grew clear,  
 And moaned ' Arisen ! Arisen ! ' and in his cell  
 The Murderer, for whom the pitiless bell  
 Would toll at dawn, sat with uplifted hair  
 And broke to piteous impotence of prayer !

The poet has a vision of the Madonna and child :

A brightness touched the Babe and cover'd Him,—  
 Such brightness as we feel in summer days  
 When hawthorn blossoms scent the flowery ways  
 And all the happy clay is verdure-clad ;  
 And the Babe seem'd as others who make glad  
 The homes of mortals, and the Mother's face  
 Was like a fountain in a sunny place  
 Giving and taking gladness, and her eyes  
 Beheld no other sight in earth or skies  
 Save the blest Babe on whom their light did shine.

Although so lonely and so woe-begone is the old man, the poet is conscious, as they proceed, of eyes that glimmered from the dark, and of shapes that crawled or crouched low on the Bridge,

waiting to catch the pity of his eyes, or to touch his raiment hem; and then arose suddenly what seemed like the clangour and roar of a storm-torn sea, and 'shrill as shrieks of ocean birds that fly over the angry waters, rose the cry of human voices'; and suddenly he seems to find himself upon an open Plain beyond the City, and before his face rises, with mad surges thundering at its base, a mountain like Golgotha, and 'the waves that surged round its sunless cliffs and caves were human—countless swarms of Quick and Dead.' The dense cloud of human forms clamber round the Ancient Man, who trails along a woeful cross of wood, and as he goes, bruised, bleeding, and outworn, the phantoms of Golgotha prick him on with spears, and, laughing in scorn, shout: 'At last thy Judgment Day hath come!'

From this point the poet proceeds to draw for us, in imagery that seldom fails and often rises to eloquence of the most passionate and picturesque order, the trial of Christ before the Spirit of Humanity. The present writer has memories of many trials, but all seem dimmed in comparison with the picture of this ghostly tribunal, that the daring poet has drawn for us, out of the very caldrons of his imagination. We may recall the burning anxieties, the inspired rhetoric, of the trial of Warren Hastings; we may have ghastly memories of many struggles for liberty and life in the courts of France at the time of the Revolution, and stand with awe,

facing our own memories of pictures painted for us of the horrors of the Committee of Public Safety; but however keen our power of recollection, however bright the colouring of these pictures of the memory, they all sink into grey-ness before the purple, the 'thundering' blackness of this trial, as conceived in the imagination of Robert Buchanan.

'In your dreams this thing will haunt you,' was no idle boast of the poet. No reader of 'The Wandering Jew' will wipe from his memory the picture of the lonely Man of Sorrows, standing on Golgotha mount, washed incessantly by the seething, bleeding Waters of Humanity, and having witnessed against him the millions of those who have fallen by the growth, the development, and the politics of the Church founded in his name. However much we may find that the logic and the reasoning is turgid and unconvincing, however much we may be aroused to protest by occasional irrelevances, however much the whole spirit of the trial may disturb our spiritual momentum, and perhaps shock our sense of what we vaguely term 'reverence,' which may, after all, be only a voiceless fear, we will be compelled to own that the poet has drawn for us a picture, that, for glowing metaphor, dramatic surroundings, and poetic atmosphere, stands high among modern poetical creations. The speech of the advocate of the bleeding heart of humanity, if not suited for the cold judicious temperament of a judge, is yet,

as a forensic effort directed towards a jury, powerful by the very majesty of its rhetoric.

The trial opens by an address in words of simplicity, addressed by the judge to the Christ :

'Thou shalt be judged and hear thy judgment spoken  
Before the World whose slumbers thou hast broken ;  
Thou saidst, " I have fought with Death and am the stronger.  
Wake to Eternal Life and sleep no longer ! "  
And men, thy brethren, troubled by thy crying,  
Have rush'd from Death to seek the Life undying,  
And men have anguish'd, wearied out with waiting  
For the great unknown Father of thy creating,  
And now for vengeance on thy head they gather,  
Crying, " Death reigns ! There is no God—no Father ! "'

Then in impassioned words the Advocate for the prosecution commences his long charge against the accused, telling how Death reigned since Time began, 'Sovran of Life and change,' ere the Christ came to break our rest, and that now, within the flesh of men, there grows

The poison of a dream that slays repose,  
The trouble of a mirage in the air ;

and how the Earth has been turned into a lazarus-house by the strife of woeful men, who rend each other in their search for barren glory and eternal life. In stately periods he proceeds to record the chief facts concerning the birth, education, and career of Christ ; how, finding among the Jewish race the old prophecy of a Messiah, he threw the royal raiment ready made on his bare back, and, to clinch his claim, 'proceeded by simple devices of the wizard's trade' to perform miracles ; how he rode to Jerusalem and kept



his kingly state with publican and sinners, profaned the Holy Temple of the race, and was slain by his own race. But, he adds, 'the Man's black crime had scarce begun':

Had this Man, like the rest of Adam's seed,  
Rested within his grave, turned back to dust,  
Accepted dissolution, as were just,  
Well had it been for him and all man's race!

But 'He rose—this Jew,' and for a season hid his head; but after years had passed, 'mortals began to see in divers lands a phantom,' who cried, 'I am the Christ—believe on me, or lose your soul eternally!' Continuing, the Advocate tells of the fall of Paganism, and 'of all the gentle gods that gladden'd man'—of how a glory passed away from the Mother Earth, 'the gladsome mother, mother of things of clay.' In her name, firstly, 'he demands justice on her son, this Jew':

The rumour of his godhead grew;  
Yea, men were conscious of a Presence sad,  
Crownèd with thorns, in ragged raiment clad,  
Haunting the sunless places of the Earth.

Mystic legends of his birth, stories of his miracles and of his death, were whispered abroad, and many weary souls worn out with cares,

But chiefly women bruised and undertrod,  
Believed this Man indeed the Son of God,—  
Because he said, 'The high shall be estranged,  
The low uplifted, and the weak avenged,  
And blest be those who have cast this world away  
To await the dawning of my Judgment Day!'

Straightway martyrs and ascetics and fanatics were found on every hand:

I deny not that to some, a few  
Poor Souls without a hope, without a friend,  
The lie brought comfort and a peaceful end ;  
Nor (to be just to him we judge, even him,  
This Jew, whose presence makes the glad World dim)  
That often to the martyr in his prison  
He went and whisper'd ' Comfort ! I am risen ' ;  
Nor that to sick-beds sad, as Death came near,  
He stole with radiant face and whisper'd cheer,  
And to the Crucified brought secretly  
The vinegar and sponge of Charity !

**And secondly, in the name of those**

Who in his Name, with calm unbated breath,  
Went smiling down the dark descent of Death,

he demands justice on their Christ, this Jew !  
From land to land the tidings flew of the Divinity  
of Christ, and on every hand, from beggar to king,  
came crawling myriads to the baptismal fonts.  
And soon ' They set a Priest on High and  
crowned him king, next to Christ, next to God ;  
and in the Pope's name countless temples rose  
where Priests, grown bold, conceived damned  
deeds and thoughts befitting Hell ' :

They went abroad, his Priests, like wolves that scent  
Lambs in the field, and slew the innocent ;  
The holy Shepherds who in places green  
To Isis sang, and Thammuz songs serene  
They found and slaughter'd, till their red blood ran  
In torrents down the streams Egyptian.

**And thirdly, in the name of Pagans 'blest and  
blind, who loved the old gods best, for they  
were kind,' he demands justice on this Jew. In  
bitter tones and passioned words the Advocate pro-  
ceeds to paint the pictures of the many devilries**

that were associated with the Church in the middle ages :

Now, in the name of vestals sacrificed  
 To feed the lust of those same priests of Christ,  
 Of acolyte children tangled in the mesh  
 Of infamous and nameless filths of flesh,  
 In the name of those whom King and Priest and Pope  
 Cast down to dust, beyond all peace and hope,  
 Yea, in their names who made this Man their guide,  
 And curst by men, by him were justified,  
 I demand justice on their Christ, this Jew !

Passing on, he tells how

in time  
 The very smile of Life became a crime  
 Against his Godhead ;

how fathers turned against their children, brother turned against brother, and sons against their mother, because the Jew cried, 'Life itself is shame and sin ; break ye all human ties and ye shall win my realm beyond the grave' ; the world turning from the sunshine of life and donning the leprous garbs of famine, self-abnegation, and martyrdom :

Now in the name of Life defiled and scorn'd,  
 Of hearts that broke because this Phantom warn'd,  
 Of weary mothers desolately dying  
 For sons whose hearts were hardened to their crying,  
 Of wives made husbandless and left unblest,  
 Of little children starving for the breast,  
 Of homes made desolate from sea to sea  
 Because he said, ' Leave all, and follow me,'  
 I demand justice on their Christ, this Jew !

After dwelling on the prosecution of those who sought not the Cross but light, and in the names of those great souls

Who fathom'd Nature's secret star-some ways,  
 And read the law of Life with fearless gaze,

demanding doom and justice on the Jew, the Advocate proceeds to call the individual witnesses 'of this Man's crime.'

First, Judas Iscariot, then Ahasuerus, the other wandering Jew, doomed to walk on from sleepless year to year, 'because he demanded of the Christ that he should cast his Cross aside and take a Throne'; Pilate, 'The Roman wars not with such foes as he'; and then the phantoms of Roman kingship, Tiberius, Sejanus, and the rest come, followed by Antichrist himself, who testifies that though he made the Earth vile to glut his lechery, the Christ rose not :

To the old Gods I sang  
My triumph-song that thro' the nations rang  
While Rome was burning ! On my mother's womb  
I thrust the impious heel ! Yet from his tomb  
This Jesus stirr'd not !

In rapid succession come a throng of martyrs slain by the Antichrist. 'Crowd after crowd they passed, and passing, threw a curse or prayer on him who anguished there':

Crown'd with the calm of a divine despair.

Then rose Julian, the apostate :

I heard the wretched weep, the weary moan,  
Saw Nature sickening because this Man wrought  
To scatter poison in the wells of Thought,  
So that no Soul might live in peace and be  
Baptized in wisdom and philosophy ;  
Wherefore I summoned from their lonely graves  
The Spirits of the mountains and the waves,  
The tutelary Sprites of flowers and trees,  
The rough wild Gods and naked Goddesses,  
And all alive with joy they leapt around  
My leaf-hung chariot, to the trumpet's sound !

Yea, and I wakened from ancestral night  
 The human shapes of Healing and of Light,  
 Asclepios with his green magician's rod,  
 And Aristotle, Wisdom's grave-eyed god,  
 And bade them teach the natural law and prove  
 The eternal verities of Life and Love.

**Marcus Aurelius, Hypatia,**

'Seeking in the fountains of the past  
 Strange pearls of Dream and dim poetic thought.'

**Mahomet, Buddha,**

'Star-eyed and sad and very beautiful,  
 They taught them how to live, I taught them how to die.'

Zoroaster, Menu, Mores, Confucius, Prometheus  
 all testified and vanished. Following come in  
 hoards the Vicars of this Christ, the ghostly heirs  
 of Wisdom and of Woe, the Souls long fled, the  
 Great, the Just, the Good, who cannot die 'be-  
 cause this piteous phantom passeth by.' Then  
 come Galileo, Castilio, and Bruno, 'butchered in  
 Christ's name,' and myriads of others who sought  
 to read the open scrolls of Earth and Heaven :

Wherever in their sadness they have sought  
 To find the stainless flowers of lonely Thought,  
 Raising the herb of Healing and the bloom  
 Of Love and Joy, this Man from out his Tomb  
 Hath stalk'd.

**The Advocate declaims :**

Save for this Jew,  
 The luminous House of flesh and blood most fair,  
 Rainbow'd from dust and water and sweet air,  
 The green Earth round it, and the Seas that roll  
 To cleanse the Earth from shining pole to pole,  
 The Heavens, and Heavens beyond without a bound,  
 The Stars in their processions glory-crown'd,  
 Each star so vast that it transcends our dreams,  
 So small, a child might grasp it, so it seems,

Like a light butterfly ! The wondrous screed  
Of Nature open lay for Man to read ;  
World flashed to world, in yonder Void sublime,  
The messages of Light and Change and Time ;  
The Sea had voices, and the Spirit of Earth  
Had sung her mystic runes of Death and Birth,  
Of all the dim progressions Life had known,  
And writ them on the rocks in words of stone.

Ghostwise, the procession sweeps along, 'martyrs  
of truth and warriors of the right,' Justinian, Du  
Molay, Abelard, Eloise, King Frederick, 'his step  
serene and strong as if he trod on altars,'  
Algazali, Alhazen, Petrarch, John Huss, Da  
Gama, and Magellan faring forward on his quest ;  
'putting the craven cowls of Rome to shame.'

With waving brands pass along the testifiers  
of the world who were slain in the Christ's name,  
the hosts of Ind, the children of Peru and the  
black seed of Ham, and last of all, 'Montezuma,  
King and Lord,' with many other monarchs less  
than he, and many slain under the banner of the  
Crusaders.

After them, the 'Followers of the Crucified, the  
ravening wolves of wrath that never sleep.'

Struggling unto the Judgment place they came,  
Smiting each other in their Master's Name ;  
Beneath their feet fell women stabb'd and cleft,  
And little children anguishing bereft.  
And like a River of Blood that ever grew,  
They rush'd until they roll'd round that pale Jew,  
And lo ! his feet grew bloody ere he was 'ware !  
Yet still they smote each other, and in despair  
Shriek'd out his praises as they multiplied  
Their dead around him. . . . And thus *they* testified !

The Huguenot, the nun, the Martyrs of the Book  
and the Mass, priests of Rome, priests of Luther

swimming past in waves of carnage, with the Cross of Blood wildly waving o'er, gave place to Jean Calas, kneeling at the feet of Voltaire, Holbach, Diderot, 'foes of the Godhead and the friends of Man,' and, last of all, the seeds of the Jewish race themselves.

One God we worship, and this Man we slew,  
Seeing he took the Holy Name in vain !  
And since that hour thro' he was justly slain,  
His hate hath follow'd us from place to place !  
Wherefore, O Judge, we, children of his race,  
Scorn'd, tortured, shamed, defamed, defiled, and driven  
Outcast from every gate of Earth or Heaven,  
Still martyr'd living and still dishonour'd dead,  
Demand thy wrath and judgment on his head,  
Jesus the Jew, not Christ, but Antichrist !

Like hordes of wolves, fierce, foul and famishing,  
the children of the Ghetto pass singing, 'Holy,  
holy still thy name shall be, Jerusalem, thro'  
God's eternity,' and crying for vengeance on him  
who has brought their city to desolation, scattered  
their tents, riven their robes, and driven their race  
like chaff before the blast, in darkness, ever  
homeless, thro' the lands.

With the passing of these children of Israel, the  
case for the prosecution ends, and Christ is called  
upon to produce those who can and will testify in  
his name.

The Jew gazed round, and wheresoe'er his gaze  
Shed on that throng its gentle suffering rays,  
Tumult and wrath were hush'd, as in deep Night  
Great waves lie down to lap the starry light  
And lick the Moon's cold feet that touch the Sea.

With gentle accents the weary Christ speaks of  
his own life :

'I remember, on this my Judgment Day,  
Not what is near, but what is far away.  
Within my Father's House, I fell to sleep  
In dreamless slumber mystical and deep,  
And when I waken'd to mine own faint crying,  
Above the cradle small where I was lying,  
A Mother's face hung like a star and smiled.'

He proceeds to tell how he gradually lost the memories of his former simple existence and simple natural thoughts in the thoughts of the Life Eternal and of his Father's face. Of the witnesses of the Christ, we have a glimpse of John the Baptist, who, in the course of his testimony, cries :

'And tho' thy brow  
Is furrowed deep with years, I know thee now,  
And in the name of all thou wast and art,  
God's substance, of the living God a part,  
Bear witness still, as I bare witness then,  
Before this miserable race of men !'

Then saw I, as he ceased and stood aside,  
Another Spirit fair and radiant-eyed,  
Who, creeping thither, at the Jew's feet fell,  
And looking up with love ineffable  
Cried ' Master ! ' and I knew that I beheld,  
Tho' his face, too, was worn and grey with eld,  
That other John whom Jesus to his breast  
Drew tenderly, because he loved him best !  
But even as I gazed, my soul was stirred  
By other Shapes that stole without a word  
Out of the silent dark, and kneeling low  
Stretched out loving hands and wept in woe ;  
The gentle Mother of God grown grey and old,  
Her silver hair still thinly sown with gold,  
Mary the wife, and Mary Magdalen,  
Who murmur'd, ' Lord, behold thy Handmaiden,  
And kiss'd his feet, her face so sadly fair  
Hid in the shadows of her snow-strewn hair ;  
And close to them, as thick as stars, appear'd



Faces of children, brightening as they near'd  
 The presence of their Father : and following these,  
 Pallid Apostles, falling upon their knees,  
 Crying, ' Messiah—Master—we are here !'

Of other witnesses, the Apostle Paul speaks thus :

And I upraised  
 Temples of marble where thy flocks might pray,  
 And where no Temple was from day to day,  
 I made the earth thy Temple, and the sky  
 A roof for thy Belovèd. Lamb of God,  
 Thy blood redeem'd the Nations, while I trod  
 The garden of thy Gospel, bearing thence  
 Strange flowers of Love and Holy Innocence,  
 And setting up aloft for all to see  
 Thy Hôteh-lilies, Faith, Hope, Charity ;  
 And of these three I knew the last was best,  
 Because, like thee, dear Lord, 'twas lowliest !  
 Thy Witnesses ? Countless as desert sands  
 Their bones are scatter'd o'er the seas and lands !  
 Whene'er the Lamp of Life hath sunken low,  
 Whene'er Death beckon'd and 'twas time to go,  
 Where'er dark Pestilence and Disease had crawl'd,  
 Where'er the Soul was darken'd and appall'd,  
 Where mothers wept above their dead first-born,  
 Where children to green graves brought gifts forlorn  
 Of flowers and tears, where, struck 'spite helm and shield,  
 Pale warriors moan'd upon the battlefield,  
 Where Horror thicken'd as a spider's mesh  
 Round plague-smit men and lepers foul of flesh,  
 Where Love and Innocence were brought to shame,  
 And Life forgot its conscience and its aim,  
 Thy blessing, even as Light from far away,  
 Came bright and radiant upon eyes of clay  
 And turn'd the tears of pain to tears of bliss !  
 Nay, more, to Death itself thy loving kiss  
 Brought consecration ; he, that Angel sad,  
 Ran like a Lamb beside thee, and was glad.

When he ceased, shapes of dead saints arose, a  
 shining throng, shouting, ' Hosannah to the Lord !'  
 while the fierce anger of the hosts around gave  
 vent to a wild cry for Judgment on the Jew. Far  
 as the sight could penetrate the blackness of the

Night, stretched the multitudinous living sea,  
the angry waters of Humanity, and the Man  
Divine seemed like a lonely Pharos on a rock.  
While the Judgment is being spoken, 'the grey  
mother to his bosom crept, and the other Mary,'  
who held him dear for the human love within  
his eyes, both yearning to share his failure or his  
glory. With piteous, eloquent voice Christ pours  
forth to that turbulent ocean of yearning humanity  
his heart's blood. 'Ye hungered, and I fed ye. Ye  
thirsted, and I gave ye drink. Ye revelled, and I  
moaned without your door, outcast and cold. Ye  
sinned in my name, and flung me the remnant of  
your shame. All I sowed in love, ye reaped in  
scorn.'

Woe to ye all, and endless woe to me,  
Who deem'd that I could save Humanity.

I plough'd the rocks, and cast in rifts of stone  
The seeds of Life Divine that ne'er have grown.

And as he stands there, 'serene and luminous as  
an Alpine peak shining above these valleys,' his  
Doom is spoken :

'Thou shalt abide while all things ebb and flow,  
Wake while the weary sleep, wait while they go,  
And treading paths no human feet have trod,  
Search on still vainly for thy Father, God ;  
Thy blessing shall pursue thee as a curse  
To hunt thee, homeless, thro' the Universe ;  
No hand shall slay thee, for no hand shall dare  
To strike the godhead Death itself must spare !  
With all the woes of Earth upon thy head,  
Uplift thy Cross and go. Thy Doom is said.'

And lo ! while all men come and pass away,  
That phantom of the Christ, forlorn and gray,  
Haunteth the Earth with desolate footfall. . . .

The poet ends this epos of the World's despair with the prayer :

God help the Christ, that Christ may help us all !

We have here at some length, and yet in a very superficial manner, taken a glimpse at the general character of this strange Christmas carol. Not losing sight of the essentially dramatic element in the poem, we must approach it, not as the majority of the Press did at the time of its publication, with a half-concealed sneer, but in the same spirit of reverence which inspires the poet himself throughout. There is scarcely a passage that does not betray the prayer of an almost broken-hearted poet, seeking for a solution of the meaning of human misery, human suffering, and human darkness. It is, as a contemporary says, 'a half-tremulous, half-wistful wail over the gigantic failure of Christ; and the main drift of the poem is love for Christ, and impatience with the Eternal Father for His delay in securing him his triumph.'

Whatever its poetic failings, however unfaithful it is to 'classic tradition,' however 'false to poetry,' whatever these expressions may mean, it is neither nebulous nor dishonest. It is the expression, in a poetical sense, of the aspirations and feelings of the aspiring modern. Breathing neither the spirit nor the poetry of Dante and Milton, it is nevertheless as true to nineteenth-century aspiration, and as true to Mr. Buchanan's own conception of artistic work, as those ancients' works were true to the spirit of their age, and their conceptions

of artistic rectitude. The Alpha and Omega of poetic construction have yet to be written, and as to the subjects that are legitimate for poetic treatment, the Alpha begins at man's first aspiration, and the Omega ends at man's last triumphal song. Thirty years ago Mr. Buchanan had bewailed the fact that Christianity was quite forgotten as a subject for poetry, and in the face of Philistines and those who would confine the poet to a fairyland of sylvan ways, and to singing of patriotic odes, he has essayed here a task, and succeeded so far in it as to ensure for him a distinctive place, not only among the singers, but also among the suggestive and constructive thinkers of the age. 'I would not,' said one critic, 'give one "Poet Andrew" for a hundred Wandering Jews.' The poet is quite content—for those who want 'Poet Andrew' the poem and other of its class are there; but the poet has other business in hand, and another audience to whom religion is an eternal verity, composed of those who can only reach intellectual satisfaction and moral encouragement by aspiring above mere domestic aspirations and fireside dreaming, and coming with their souls to the very gates of heaven and hell.

The natural sequence of the poet's thought is expressed in the poem published four years later, entitled 'The Ballad of Mary the Mother.' It is here that we have definitely stated the views which the poet holds as to the birth and life of Christ, and the essential factors that go to make up his place in the economy of human thought and con-

duct. Love for the humanity of the Nazarene has not been expressed by the poet in stronger terms than here, a love unaltered throughout the whole of the period wherein the poet has evolved his eclectic faith. In a prose note, Mr. Buchanan says: 'I have thought myself justified, while trying to realise how Jesus of Nazareth may have struck a contemporary, in using as my dramatic mouthpiece his own mother, the wife of Joseph the Carpenter. All the phases of my conception can be supported, if necessary, by the existing Christian documents; and if they could not be so supported, they are still justifiable, since the imagination of a modern poet is fully as reliable as the imagination of a mediæval monk.

'Goethe, in his old age, foresaw the time when Christianity might become a "subject" for Poetry, a subject, that is to say, to be treated without reference of any kind to existing dogma or superstition. Thanks to modern scientific thought, the time has come sooner than was anticipated. We have reached the vantage-ground where the story of Jesus can be taken out of the realm of Supernaturalism and viewed humanely, in the domain of sympathetic Art. To even so late an observer as Renan, such a point of view was difficult, not to say impossible. Now, for the first time, human science has actually uttered its fiat, and written it on the rock. That fiat is, 'The Law of God is "never" broken.' Whosoever professes to break the Eternal Order is ignorant of the Divine Method—the true Atheist—*ἀθεός*, apart from God.

## **'BALLAD OF MARY THE MOTHER' 229**

It seems a paradox to say so, but in this respect—ignorance of the Divine Law, assumption of power to break it or suspend it—Jesus of Nazareth was an unbeliever, perhaps the most audacious unbeliever who has ever lived.

'He led the war against Nature, against the God of Nature, and that unhappy war is not over yet. But he, the new Prometheus, urging on his legions of despairing Titans, adopted a new system of attack—he assumed that the God of Nature "did not exist"; and he substituted in his imagination a new Personality, his own. History has furnished the answer to his pretensions, and the God of Nature, the great unknown God who is at once the master and servant of His own inexorable Will, has conquered all along the line. God reigns—Jesus and the Titans have failed; and their failure has deluged the world with innocent blood.

'In saying so much, I do not wish to infer that my sympathy is with the Conqueror. No; it is with the fallen Atheists, not with the ever-victorious Deity whom they have one by one denied; with Prometheus, with Jesus; with the Dreamers who would fain dry the weeping eyes of men. Though they turn from the living God and substitute the gentle Phantom of their own desire; though they utter a promise which is ever broken, assume a hope which can never be realised: they are still, in the sweetest and surest meaning of the word, our Brethren, and we forgive them their sins against the eternal

Law, because we, too, would fain dream as they do. Alas, that the time should come when we must dream no more !

‘ Meantime, let it be clearly understood that the Poets have ever been on the losing side, on the side, that is to say, of Jesus and the Titan-Dreamers: and hence the proof of the Poet is still to be found in his temperamental antagonism to the God of Nature.

‘ In this connection, therefore, it is necessary to repeat with emphasis that it is on the truth or falsehood of the supernatural pretension that the “moral” character of Jesus must finally stand or fall. It was by Miracles that he attested his divine sovereignty; it was by Miracles that he won his first following; it was by Miracles that he proclaimed himself the Son of God; and without the historical belief in the Miracles Christianity would have died a natural death in its first infancy. It is not, indeed, a creed of Love which has fascinated Humanity. “God is Love,” cried Jesus; “and my ‘proof’ that God is Love is this—I can heal the sick, and I can raise the dead.” The whole question, therefore, is reduced to one of facts, of proof. If we can believe that Jesus raised the dead, if we can even believe that any dead man since the world’s beginning has slipt his shroud and arisen, then we need not hesitate for a moment in accepting the pretensions of Christianity. If, on the other hand, we believe that the eternal Law is “never” broken, we need not pause to consider the moral char-

acter of Jesus. We may accept him (as we are bound to do) as a man of supremely noble and loving nature, we may even believe that, in the assumption of supernatural power, he was merely self-deluded, not dishonest; but we cannot bow down before him as either the incarnate God or even the wisest of men.

'The fit and only platform to discuss and examine this religion, this many-coloured kaleidoscope which men call Christianity, is, consequently, our own experience of human and natural phenomena. In the light or darkness of our own dwellings, in the silence of our own thoughts, in the record of all we have seen, known, and felt, in the presence of our own beloved ones, and by the sleeping-places of our own dead, we have to ask ourselves—has the God of Love, in whom we may otherwise believe, ever attested his being by any interruption of his own laws? Has he not, on the contrary, sealed up the eyes of the blind, left the leper to die of his disease, forborne to disturb, or even break, the sleep of Death? If it is borne in upon us, every day we live, that the laws of life are "never" broken, and that God has never vouchsafed us a sign, even a glimmer, of His personal presence, what shall we say of the folly, or the insanity, of the great Atheists who have perished miserably in the assumption of miraculous or God-like power?

"Grant, indeed," says the bewildered sentimentalist, "that the proof has failed, that no miracle was ever wrought, does not the divine



spirit of Jesus remain secure to pervade creation?" By no means. The spirit was that of a deluded sceptic who aspired to break, and who misinterpreted, the laws of God, and who perished, of necessity, like a fly on the wheel. How then, it is asked, has Christianity itself emerged to save and gladden the souls of men? Here, again, our opponents are arguing in a circle, for the religion of Jesus has never really triumphed at all, except in the area of priestly politics and popular superstition. Our time has been wasted, we have been made the sport of a kindly thaumaturgist, for nearly nineteen hundred years.

'Meantime we have constructed, out of the débris of historical documents, an ideal Jesus, a fanciful and fictitious Son of God. All the hope and despair of Humanity, the blood of the Martyrs, the visions of the Prophets, the dreams of the Poets, have nurtured this imaginary Messiah, who sums up in his nebulous person all that we mortals are, or hope to be. He heals no sick, he raises no dead, it is true; we begin to realise at last that he can never have done so; but Jesus, like Mesopotamia, is a blessed word, and we cling to it with fond tenacity.

'In this poem, however, I at least acquit the Nazarene of his atheism—that is, I make him realise, after his momentary madness of supposed godhead, that the creature who endeavours to break the Divine Order must meet the Atheist's

doom. Cruel and inexplicable as that order is, it is absolute and inevitable. Humanity will never free itself from its chains by assuming "that they do not exist." The true believer in God is the man who discovers and recognises His pitiless laws, from the first Law till the last. The true witness to God is the man who, much as he execrates the anarchy and cruelty of Nature, and as a consequence of the God of Nature, accepts things as they are and endeavours to lighten the burthen for his fellow-men. Jesus was a man of a beautiful temperament, carried beyond himself by a false and sentimental conception of the mechanism of Life. He uttered, no one so exquisitely, the human cry for a Divine Fatherhood. But unfortunately, he appealed to Nature for corroboration of his appeal. Nature never answered him; then as now, she kept God's secret.'

These are strong words, and it is necessary to quote them to understand to what point the poet has reached. Mr. Buchanan's hatred of trimming prevents us daring, even if we so desired in some way, to mask or modify these expressions. They are the natural outcome of the position he took up at first, they are the evolved expression of the idea he conceived when he wrote 'The Book of Orm'; we doubt not that the genesis of these fully expressed ideas could be found even in earlier days. There is little need now in questioning Mr. Buchanan as to his views; he may be met squarely and openly on the wide field where myriads of

thinkers have long taken their stand and wrestled—on the basis of pure, abstract thought. He still remains after it all a 'Believer,' and from a Catechism appended to this particular poem we extract the following :

*Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ, God's Son ?*

In Him, and in my Brethren every one :  
The child of Mary who was crucified,  
The gods of Hellas fair and radiant-eyed,  
Brahm, Balder, Guatama, and Mahomet,  
All who have pledged their gains to pay my debt  
Of sorrows,—all who through this world of dream  
Breathe mystery and ecstasy supreme ;  
The greater and the less : the wise, the good,  
Inheritors of Nature's godlike mood ;  
In these I do believe eternally,  
Knowing them deathless, like the God in me.

*Dost thou not in thine inmost heart believe,  
Despite the lies which faithless sophists weave,  
In Holy Church ?*

All Churches, great or small !  
But most, that roof'd with blue celestial,  
And fairer far than Temples built by hands,  
Which, while all others fall, survives and stands !  
More, I believe in Hell, and hope for Heaven !  
Yea, also, that my fears may be forgiven,  
And that this Body shall arise again  
To Light and Everlasting Life. AMEN.

*Name the Commandments !*

Ten. Thou shalt have one  
God, and one only (may His will be done !)  
Thou shalt not fashion graven images  
Of Him, or any other, and to these  
Give prayer or praise ; nor shall thy faith be priced  
By any priest of Christ or Antichrist,  
In any Temple or in any Fane ;  
Thou shalt not take the Name of God in vain.  
All days shalt thou keep holy, pure and blest,  
Six shalt thou labour, on the seventh rest,

But every day shall as a Sabbath be  
Of heavenly hope and love and charity.  
Honour thy father and thy mother,—not  
That God may lengthen and make bright thy lot,  
But that the love thou bearest them may spring  
Fountain-like to refresh each living thing  
Which lives and loves like thee. Slay not at all,—  
Neither to feed thy wrath, nor at the call  
Of nations lusting in accursed strife,  
Nor to appease the Law's black lust for life ;  
But take the murderer by the hand, and bring  
Pity and mercy for his comforting.  
Tho' thou must never an Adulterer be,  
Deem not the deed of kind Adultery,  
But reverence that function which keeps fair  
The Earth, the Sea, the Ether, and the Air,  
And peopling countless worlds with lives like thine,  
Maketh all Nature fruitful and divine ;  
For as thou dost despise thy flesh and frame  
Shalt thou despise the Lord thro' whom they came,  
And if one act of these thou deemest base  
Thou spittest in the Fountain of all Grace.  
Thou shalt not steal, nor any lie sustain  
Against thy neighbour ; covet not his gain,  
His wife, or ought that's his to have and hold,  
For robbing him, thou robb'st thyself tenfold !

*What dost thou learn from these Commandments ?*

Love

For things around me, and for things above  
Worship and reverence ; hate of deeds that sin  
Against the living God who dwells within  
This Temple of my life ; obedience  
To that celestial Light which issues thence.

The 'Ballad' is written in the metre familiar to all who know the poet's 'Ballad of Judas Iscariot.' The opening stanzas are reproductions in verse of those words of the New Testament which tell of the coming of Mary the Mother to the door of the Synagogue and asking for her Son, and of the answer Jesus gave: 'These are my mother, these are my

brethren.' We are told how Mary was left weeping sore while Jesus passed on his heavenward way :

He turned away from his mother's face  
To his Father's face in heaven.

As he wandered on from door to door,  
She followed him from afar ;  
His face was bright as the moon in heaven,  
And hers like a lonely star.

The whole poem, indeed, pictures the loneliness of the Mother in the loss of the love of a perfect human Son, by his assumption of the claims of Godhead. Never was higher tribute paid to womanhood than the poet has paid here to the dove-eyed woman of Galilee, and equally eloquent in its tribute of pure manhood and graceful sonhood is the picture of the infant Jesus. With the heart's desire of the Son sprung the yearning of the Mother for the love that she had lost, a love which never changed, and was fiercest in its intensity when, after the storm and the stress, the weary 'dreamer,' the crucified Christ, the dead Son was clasped to the mother's breast.

The two Marys, Mary the Mother and Mary the Maiden, sit in the bower in a high seat and alone, while the white-robed sewing maiden is moving to and fro, the weariful mother telling to the other Mary the story of her life :

As fair as the Hûleh-lily  
That blooms in the summer beam,  
Was Mary the Maiden, wearing  
Her robe of the silken seam ;

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And on her hair and her bosom  
Were jewels and gems of price,  
And round her neck there was hanging  
A charm with a strange device :

A heart of amber, and round it  
Ruby and emerald bands,  
And over it, wrought in crystal,  
Two little winged hands !

White and warm was her bosom  
That rose and fell below,  
And light on her face was playing,  
Deep, like the after-glow ;

With the waves of her heaving bosom  
That strange light went and came,  
Now dim and dark with the shadow of earth,  
Now flush'd with a heavenly flame ;

And the warmth of the glad green meadows,  
The scent of the Night and the Day,  
Flowed up from Mary the Maiden  
To Mary the old and grey.

There is much love between the two, the Mother  
poor and lonely in lot, and the other Mary who  
is painted here as one of high birth ; the mutual  
feeling springing from the love which the latter  
bears for the man Jesus :

'Twas Mary, the woeful Mother,  
Bent down and kissed her brow,  
' God help thee, Mary, my daughter,  
And all such maids as thou !

' His love is not for the things of earth,  
His blessing for things of clay,—  
A voice from the Land beyond the grave  
Is calling my Son away !

' How should he stoop to a love like thine  
Who hath no love for me ?  
In my womb he grew, from my womb he fell,  
And I nursed him on my knee.'

'Twas Mary, the dark-eyed Maiden,  
Smiled through her night-black hair :

' I met his eyes as he passed this day,  
And methought he found me fair !

' There is never a man of the sons of men  
Who would not smile on me,  
But if thy Son is more than a man,  
Alack for me and thee !

' But if thy Son is Joseph's son,  
E'en as his brethren be,  
Why, I am Mary of Magdala !  
And a King might mate with me.

'Twas Mary, the woeful Mother,  
Answered again, and said :  
' The love of the world is not for him,  
Nor the happy bridal bed !

' He has cast away all women of earth  
Even as he casts out me,—  
In my womb he grew, from my womb he fell,  
And I nursed him on my knee.'

With rending heart the Mother speaks of her  
loss and what it meant to her, and with gentle  
and suggestive words she disavows the Godhead  
of her Son :

' The God of Israel passeth  
From world to world on high,  
The seas and the mighty mountains  
Quake as He passeth by ;

' No eye hath looked upon Him,  
No soul hath fathom'd His ways,  
His face is veil'd, though His breathing  
Filleth our nights and days ;

' His Hand is a Hand in the darkness,  
His Voice is a Voice in the gloom,  
But seed of Jehovah hath never  
Been sown in a woman's womb.'

The betrothal to Joseph is told of, and the  
agony of the Mother, who already knew that

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'A little hand in the darkness  
Was lifting the latch of my heart.'

And a splendid tribute is made to a forgiving,  
an understanding Joseph :

'The heart of a woman is feeble,  
But the strength of a man is strong ;  
Wisest and best of mortals  
Was Joseph of Nazareth.'

Following this is a description of the happy home  
at Nazareth, and of the growth of the loving  
Son in all the fine attributes of manhood and  
sonhood. The intense passion of the Mother for  
the Son is never lost sight of :

'The ways of the world are weary,  
But the kiss of a mouth is sweet !'

And in her pride of motherhood she cries to  
Mary :

'A maid's love. O my daughter  
Is a pearl that men may buy,  
But the love of a new-made mother  
Is a rainbow in the sky !'

And in language that recalls the descriptions in  
the Song of Solomon, she dwells on the beauty  
and glamour of the child. Even in these early  
days, however, he seemed not as other children  
that play in the summer beam, but seemed to  
live in a dreamland of his own :

'And while from hillock to hillock  
They flew with laugh and cry,  
He watch'd the white clouds passing  
Over the still blue sky !

'So grave and yet so gentle,  
So still and yet so blest,—  
It seemed some fountain of wonder  
Flow'd in his baby breast.'



Yet there was always joy in the house, and  
always a burning sunshine in the Mother's heart,  
and as the days passed, the new joys and new  
hopes drowned the possible fears.

'The peace of God was upon me,  
The smile of God at my door,  
My soul was a summer fountain  
That filleth and floweth o'er !

'Fairer and fairer my first-born grew  
Till he was seven years old,  
And his eyes had the glint o' the waters blue  
And his hair the sunset's gold.'

His gentleness, his love for all things that God made, especially his love for the weak things of the world, the gentle, the sick, the God-stricken, the poor, the lepers, is spoken of with motherly pride ; and Jesus is also indicated here as a questioning young soul, ever eager to learn, and to hear the tales that a thousand mothers tell to their sons, of the bondage of the Jewish race, of the psalm of the poet-king, of the wise men of old, and of the promise of a Messiah.

'O sweet he was as the summer rain  
That falleth on desert ways,  
But ever the cry of human pain  
Troubled his nights and days !

'And 'twas "O, mother," and "why, mother,  
Are folks so weary and sad ?  
The sick folk die, and the lepers cry,  
Though the sun shines bright and glad !"'

The arrival at the Holy City for the Feast, his experiences in the Temple, and his gradual growth in physical, moral, and mental strength and beauty, the death of Joseph, his toiling in the

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carpenter's shop of Galilee, his teaching in the synagogue, are all recalled in tones of fond remembrance by the Mother, till there comes on the scene the figure of John the Baptist, and from this point everything is changed. 'From morning star unto evening star,' the eyes of John and Jesus spoke, and into a desert place goes the Son, never to return as before. There, alone with the silence, he fasts and hides his face, until the 'flesh of his bones was wasted, and the light of his life burnt low'; and when he came again to the Mother, 'the dews of Death were upon him, and his face seemed set in a shroud,' and although his smile was loving and gentle as of old, 'his eyes were gazing through me at something far away.' The Son speaks to the Mother of his revelation, and at his strange words the Mother has fears of his physical condition, telling him of God that

His face no eye hath looked on,  
His voice no ear hath heard;  
And yet His face is the light o' life,  
And His voice is a wingèd word.

Jesus refuses all sympathy and advice, and in the familiar words renounces the world and all old associations, and assumes (in the poem) the attributes of Godhead. In simple yet telling lines, the poet continues to put into the mouth of the Mother her impression of the life of the Son in all its varied and various forms; of the message he gave to a tired and aching world, and of his gleam of the Promised Land.

' For his voice was sweet as a fountain  
Or the voice of the turtle dove,  
As he told of a Heavenly Kingdom  
And the love that is more than love ;

' And the burden of earth was uplifted  
By the touch of a magic hand,  
And the folk beheld as they hearken'd  
The gleam of the Promised Land :

' A land of milk and of honey,  
Golden and bright and blest,  
Where the wicked would cease from troubling  
And the weary would be at rest !'

With touching pathos she speaks of the Son's message to the hungry, the weeping, the stricken ; the message spoken in those words which, in their personal element, have been the very foundation of the power of Christ amongst those who have fallen or barely succeeded in the struggle for life : ' Come unto me !'

But through it all the riddle of the Son's language as to his relation with the Godhead troubles and oppresses the Mother, who continually reminds the Son :

' Seed art thou of a mortal man,  
And grew in thy mother's womb' ;

and weeps that his thoughts are yonder in heaven, and not here on the earth with her.

Mary, the dark-eyed maiden, rejoices in him, whatsoever he does, and as he passes along midst shouts of ' Rabbi,' and as she hears of the tales of his healings and raisings from the dead, she exclaims, ' Surely this man, O mother, is more than flesh of thine.' The Mother replies :

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**'Gladly my soul would greet him  
Though he were thricefold King,  
But ever behind him as he walks  
The Shadow is following !**

**'Man is a spark in the darkness,  
His days are only a breath,  
The wings of the Lord are wide as the world  
And the shadow thereof is Death' ;**

**crying :**

**'The ways of the world are many,  
But yonder all ways meet' ;**

**while the other Mary is continually echoing in  
words her heart's yearning :**

**'There is never a man of the sons of men  
Who is half so fair as he,—  
Be he seed of a mortal or son of God,  
He is Master of men and me.'**

**And then comes Golgotha :**

**As they parted his raiment among them,  
For his vesture casting lots,  
On the clouds of the night burnt brands of light  
Like crimson leper-spots ;**

**But the storm of the night was over  
And the wild winds ceased to cry,  
Yea, all was still on the skull-shaped hill  
As the Spirit of Death crept by.**

**'Twas Mary the woeful Mother  
Lay prone beneath the Tree,  
And Mary the Maid knelt down and prayed  
With Mary of Bethany.**

**And the light came out of the skies  
And struck the Cross on the hill . . .  
And Jesus moaned and open'd his eyes,  
And the heart of the world stood still !**

**and the reiteration of the splendour of human  
love :**

The love of the Lord of Heaven  
Is a dream that passeth by,  
But the love of a mortal Mother  
Is a love that doth not die !

The sword of the Lord of Heaven  
Husheth his children's cry,  
But the love of a mortal Mother  
Shines on, tho' God goes by !

And he bowed his head on his breast  
And utter'd a woeful cry,  
And the weariful Mother's lips were prest  
To his wounds,—while God went by !

The descent from the Cross, the embalmment,  
the burial, and the sorrow of the women here  
follow in their place :

And the birth-star looked from the gates o' Death,  
As she rock'd the corse on her knee,  
And the Earth lay silently down to watch  
In the still bright arms o' the Sea.

And from over the hill the stars looked down  
With dim sad tearful eyes,  
For the cry of the Mother's broken heart  
Rang through the empty skies.

(It rang to the foot of the Throne of God  
Where all the wide world's woe,  
The dole of a million broken hearts,  
Melts like a flake of snow)—

with the final despairing cry of a bereaved  
Mother, bereaved because of the hopeless hope of  
her Son, that he could stand between man and his  
Maker, and save the world from a humanly  
conceived damnation :

'How shall the hand of a mortal  
Gather the sheaves of the Lord ?  
The hand of a man is ashes and dust,  
God's hand is fire and a sword !

**'How shall the seed of a woman  
Master Euroclydon?  
A woman's seed is as thistlebloom,  
And lo, with a breath 'tis gone!**

**'My son was fair as a lily,  
His hair was of golden sheen,  
But the lilies of Sharon perish  
When the winds of the Lord blow keen!**

**'What man shall stand in the whirlwind  
Where only the Lord may stand?  
The feet of the Lord are on the Dead,  
And the Quick blow round like sand!'**

**And then when all was over, the last rites, the  
last despairing moan of godly motherhood; the  
despair in the face of the unchangeable inexor-  
ableness of Nature!**

.

**And over the hill the Dawn's bright feet  
Flash'd in the Night's cold springs,  
And a lark rose, shaking the drops o' pearl  
From the tips of his dewy wings;**

**And the heart of the world throb'd deep and strong  
As on Creation's Day,  
And the skies that roof the happy earth  
Were as blue and as far away!**

**This is a hasty view of a poem written with  
more searching of heart, we conceive, than any-  
thing the poet had yet ventured. The blessed  
sanctity of motherhood, which has always stood  
high in the creed of the poet, is made the theme  
of the ballad, and the uselessness of the whole  
aspiration, together with the human misery it  
evoked, has touched the poet to speak these  
words, despite all temptation to the contrary.  
From a poetical point of view, 'The Ballad of Mary**

the Mother' stands high, in our opinion, amongst the poet's best work. For its very fearlessness of expression, combined with its simplicity of language, a simplicity which faithfully reflects the spirit and tone of the Gospel, it remains an important contribution to the poetical literature of religion. There is none of the fiery rhetoric of 'The Wandering Jew,' little of the mysticism of 'The Book of Orm' and 'The City of Dream,' or even of the ballad of the same metre, 'The Ballad of Judas Iscariot'; but from its faithfulness to Eastern colour, its remarkable poetic reproduction of the scriptural records, and its never-halting metre, the poem must be regarded as part of the vanguard of Mr. Buchanan's endeavour.

## CHAPTER X

### THE DEVIL

The Devil, as a subject for literature, has not been made to assume very many distinctive characters, and diabolism, that is to say, a belief in a separate 'power' which works for evil, finding its apotheosis in the personal Devil of Luther, has in only a very few instances been a distinctive element in the teachings and religious systems of the world. Demonism, of course, flourishes throughout all creeds, highly or lowly differentiated, but of evidence of an individual power which works for evil, in contradistinction to a power which works for good, there is little. There is no direct evidence that it existed in Egyptian religious thought—the earliest attempts at systems of belief of which we have records—nor do we find it in Chinese Scriptures either prior to, or contemporary with, Confucius. Jainism, the religion of the Jains, or Hermits of India, has no mention of it; not until we come to the Zoroastrian or Magdean Scriptures do we learn of twin spirits Ahura Magda, the Spirit of Holiness, and Daēvas, the Originator of Impurities.



Neither in the religion of the Opheans, nor in Vedas and Vedantism, does a Devil occur; and as for the Greeks, their philosophy in regard to a Devil has yet to be discovered, although Empedocles looked upon Man as an outcast of the gods, and thus, in a sense, suggested the Miltonic Satan. Demokritos speaks of the popular mythologies pointing to beings who may influence human affairs malevolently; but there is no evidence to show a belief in a Devil, as, for instance, it is found in the New Testament, and in the various economies of the early and later Christian Churches. The early Hebrew prophets have no indication of a belief in a Devil; the Devil of Job is not the impersonator of evil, but a servant of God sent to administer punishment. The later books of the Jews which contain references to a Devil are the Chronicles, and the Book of Zechariah, and it is doubtful if the Devil of the Chronicles is a distinct personality. As for Zechariah, he no doubt lived at a time when the religion of Judaism was being markedly influenced by the Persian or Iranian Scriptures, from which the Jews no doubt obtained their Daēvas, and it is interesting to note that the Judaical dictum, that the spirits of good and of evil cannot both be worshipped at the same time, is derived from the Persians and Zoroastrians. It is only necessary in this instance to add, that the Hebrew word Satan means 'adversary,' and that this is the interpretation to be put upon the word as it was used by Jesus in the rebuke to Peter, and that the

diabolic interpretation put on the appearance of the Serpent in the Garden of Eden is an outcome of very late Judaical theology. Even when the Jewish Devil becomes rampant, his powers are very limited compared with those of the Daēvas of Zoroastrianism, who was associated with the good spirit in the creation of man.

A definite Devil is not to be found in Tāoism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, nor is it discovered amongst the Pre-Aryan Indians, Boddos, Lipchas, Arafinas, Polynesians, Arabians, Aztecs, nor in the teachings of the Latins and the Druids. With regard to the Latins, it will be interesting for Mr. Buchanan to note that a Roman was regarded by the early Christians as a minor devil. That is a title our poet would probably be proud to possess.

Coming to modern literature, we have a variety of Devils, most of them more or less modified types of the Judaical conception, notable amongst which are the Devil of Luther (an existing force, not a literary creation), Milton's Satan, Goethe's Mephistopheles, Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, Calderon's Devil, Byron's Lucifer, and Robert Burns's Deil.

The Devil of Luther was the enemy of mankind working in human affairs—as we have said, a real existing belief, not a literary creation—a true biographical phenomenon, illustrated by means of his creator's personal experience. As Professor Masson says, 'Whatever resistance he met with, whatever obstacle to Divine Grace he found in his own heart or in external circumstances, what-

ever event he saw plainly cast in the way of the progress of the Gospel, whatever outbreak of a bad or unamiable spirit occurred in the Church, whatever strange phenomenon of nature wore a malevolent aspect—out of that he obtained a clearer notion of the Devil.’ It was a reflex of the powerful belief of his age—what Comte called the Theological Period. ‘History to Luther was not a physical course of events, it was God acting and the Devil opposing,’ a position assumed, but with entirely opposite sympathies, by Mr. Buchanan in ‘The Devil’s Case.’

The Satan of Milton was an archangel outcast from the courts of Heaven; one always conscious of power and with a high notion of Deity, who rebelled and was cast forth at the time when intimation was made by the Almighty in the Congregation of Angels that He had anointed His only begotten Son King on the Hill of Zion. With his ambition expressed in the well-known comparison, ‘better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven,’ he waits on the threshold of Creation to tempt humanity to fight against the decrees of God.

Of this be sure,  
To do aught good never will be our task,  
But ever to do evil our sole delight,  
As being the contrary to His high will  
Whom we resist.

The Devil or Mephistopheles of Goethe is quite a different person. ‘The Satan of Milton is a fallen archangel scheming his future existence. Mephistopheles is the modern spirit of evil:

Satan has a sympathetic knowledge of good; Mephistopheles knows only good as a phenomenon. Much of what Satan says might be spoken by Raphael; a devilish spirit runs through all that Mephistopheles says. Satan's "bad actions" are preceded by noble reasonings, Mephistopheles does not reason; Satan's bad actions are followed by compunctious visitings, Mephistopheles never repents; Satan is often "inly racked," Mephistopheles can feel nothing more noble than disappointment; Satan conducts an enterprise, Mephistopheles enjoys an occupation; Satan has strength of purpose, Mephistopheles is volatile; Satan's greatness lies in the vastness of his motives, Mephistopheles's in his intimate acquaintance with everything; Satan has a few sublime conceptions, Mephistopheles has accumulated a mass of observations.<sup>1</sup>

The Devil of Marlowe, orthodox enough, is not so distinctive a character, although he is Mr. Buchanan's Devil's favourite pupil, 'painted a very monster, corybantic, cloven-footed, insolent, and goggle-eyed.' Calderon's Devil 'was only hideousness divine,' while Byron's Lucifer approximated to a Goethean Mephistopheles, with a dash of Miltonic Satan; and according to Mr. Buchanan's Devil, he is as prosy as the fiend of Bailey. The Deil of Robert Burns is the Devil of eighteenth-century parochial Scotland, going about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He was treated by the poet in a scornful, humorous

<sup>1</sup> Masson.

way, and was utilised to despatch excisemen and others who, from experience, the poet knew were running hot in the face of the Church.

The Devil of Mr. Robert Buchanan bears little blood relation to any of these creatures. True, if we were sophistical enough to use the words 'Good and God' as synonymous terms, we might assume him to be only the Miltonic Satan in another make-up. The Miltonic Satan fought against 'good,' the Buchanan Devil is in revolt against 'God.'

Mr. Buchanan's Devil is an outcast from God inasmuch as he dares to sympathise with the fallen, and to raise his voice against the pitiless, inexorable law which is the spirit of the All-Father. His Devil has a sympathy only for light and knowledge, and detests creeds, which tend to close the eye and to bury Truth in nebulosity of words. His occupation is to spread light wherever he goes, to call upon man to observe the present, and not to stand star-gazing into the future. There is in the modern creation much of the sublimity of the Miltonic conception, much of his noble reasoning, and much of his sympathy with good and pity for God. There is also much of the artfulness and knowledge of the world as found in the Mephistopheles of Goethe, but he is more tender, more loving, more pitiful, and has this distinct difference, that he pleads his own cause as the dispenser of the higher righteousness, that righteousness which springs from a knowledge of oneself and of one's environment, the righteousness attained only by looking things

straight in the face as they exist, not by spying at them through a veil of superstition, tradition, and theological nebulae. The Devil of Buchanan is the spirit of Revolt, the spirit of Eclecticism, the spirit of Science as opposed to the spirit of Theology, the inspirer of research as opposed to the upholder of authority and tradition. He joins with Science in discovering that the law of Nature, which, after all, is the law of God (and herein lies his revolt against God), is the struggle for existence, and the survival of the fittest; he joins with all true religions inasmuch as they act contrary to the great principle, and step in to help the weak. He is the upholder of, and sympathiser with, the weak as against the strong; he is in sympathy with those who fall under the inexorable, inexplicable, pitiless God of the Universe. His sympathy is with all those who have sought a sign, and who have given a helping hand to poor humanity on the long dreary road to the grave; to the religious leaders like Christ, and to his starry-eyed brethren of the East—Zoroaster, Buddha, Mahomet; to searchers after Truth of the stamp of Galileo and Magellan. This Devil claims that in opposition to the Churches, which were always opposed to everything that would ease the aspiring energies of mankind, he is the fountain-head of all the great economical methods, such as Printing, the Theatre, and the modern Press, economies which have led to the spread of Truth, and to the increase of the joy of life.

His Devil is really God evolving, 'evolving out

of the inmost heart of human Love,' the spirit of knowledge and sympathy, opposed to the creeds which say 'Knowledge is evil.' 'Goethe's Mephisto,' writes the poet, 'is as crude a conception as even the Scotch "Deil"—mere intellect without heart, whereas I hold that intellect implies heart and true knowledge holiness. Goethe's typical woman, e.g. Marguerite, is a fool; it is because she is ignorant, not because she is good, that she falls—whereas Goethe poses her as the type of purity, and finally as the Eternal Feminine. But it is pure ignorance that makes her spellbound by the jewels, and leads her to poison her mother and kill her child. "My" Devil would have saved her, Goethe's monkey-devil destroys her easily. Goethe, in fact, took the vulgar view held by every parson. Hence the vogue of his poem.'

We catch a glimpse of a Devil, 'Ades, King of Hell,' in 'Undertones,' but a spirit of sorrow appears for the first time in 'The Book of Orm'; whilst not until the publication of 'The Outcast,' in 1891, was the idea conceived of a being in actual stern revolt against God, one claiming to be the Spirit of Pity. Following, in 1895, came 'The Devil's Case,' where Æon himself states his own case in the sympathetic ear of the poet, and makes his reappearance in 'The New Rome' and in 'The Devil's Sabbath.'

Let it be said here that no one who cares at all for the white-brained search for Truth need approach these poems with any feeling but one

of confidence that the poet's steps are guarded by the two highest virtues, human dignity and reverence. However much custom, tradition, yes, even logic, may be disturbed, there is nothing in these poems that need hold back a single soul in his effort to push on to the brink of the Eternal Ocean. It may be that we may have to travel far down the infernal stair, but it is only to see the heirs of heaven arising there.

In a Preface to the second edition of 'The Outcast,' the poet says: "The Outcast" was the first of what I may describe as my "Satanic series," the most recent of which was "The Devil's Case." I use the word "Satanic" to express the spirit of moral and intellectual revolt, which is just as absolute in Vanderdecken as in the greater Devil. The same unrest and unhappiness, the same dissatisfaction with the Divine plan, the same appeal to Nature against God, emerge in both characters; Vanderdecken, indeed, is the stormy child of the Spirit of Pity.'

First, then, let us take 'The Outcast,' described as a rhyme for the time, and dealing afresh with the old legend of Vanderdecken, who, having defied God, is made an outcast on the seas for ever.

The poem opens with a monologue on some of the more local aspects of the poet's world:

'A world without a God! Heigho! . . .  
The good old God had merit, though!  
*Le Bon Dieu*, gravely interfering  
In all Humanity's affairs,  
Bowing His kind grey head and hearing  
The orphan's moans, the widow's prayers,



Was worth, or so it seems to me,  
Whole cataracts of Tendency ;

There is no God, and all men know it  
Except the preacher and the poet ;  
Women are slaves and men are flunkys,  
The best but well-developed monkeys,  
And Virtue is—a huswife's sampler,  
Self-sacrifice—an usurer's chatter ;  
Once Heaven was sure and Hope was ampler,  
But now the Devil rules Mind and Matter !  
*Le Roi est mort*—destroy'd and undone,  
Or impotent and deaf and blind—  
So *vive le Roi* of Hell and London,  
Who waves a shroud for Humankind !'

The poet proceeds to dwell on the new Philosophic Pill, the worship and praise of the new God 'Man,' and laughs to scorn the idea of bending the knee to the 'King Ape Humanity.'

This stomach-troubled, squirming, aching,  
Mud-wallowing creature of a day,  
This criticising, this book-making,  
Fretful, dyspeptic thing of clay !

While expressing his admiration and love for Man as an individual 'first of creatures 'neath the sky,' human at the best, he detests Man as an Abstraction, regarding as base the history of Mankind. 'Not threefold heritage in Heaven could purge his spirit of its leaven, or make the Upright Beast divine.'

During his meditations Vanderdecken makes his entrance, and is greeted with the acclamation, 'Who the devil are "you"?' which greeting serves the visitor's purpose of dilating on the various vicious Devils created by the poets, he asserting that the only real Devil is he who

shares Humanity's affliction. The poet and the Outcast exchange points of view, the former occasionally bursting out in anger only to be re-proved by the calm and cynical Outcast, who invites the poet to pause in his 'belabouring of critics and his cryings to God,' and to sit down a space with him, comparing notes :

Come, though our strife is never ending,  
We've had our pleasure in the fight?  
Not fearing Hell or hoping Heaven,  
We face the Elemental Flood;  
Far better to be tempest-driven  
Than rot upon the harbour mud!

The poet speaks, dwelling on his own storm-tossed life, telling how with fretful, feverish tread he has paced the decks of life, and shed his sullen curses on creation; and moans that

The Creeds have withered one by one,—  
Frost-bitten roses in the garden;  
There's nothing left beneath the sun  
But lives that pass and hearts that harden.

And then the Outcast pours forth his tale, revealing his intimacy with the world, his knowledge of science and philosophy, 'as intimate with works unseemly as any Fellow of a college'—being a character callous but sad, sceptical but superstitious, 'apt in whatsoever was taking place from here to Hades.'—In tranquil after-dinner air he tells of his doom—how he had laughed at all the gods, 'and for this and for minor sins not unconnected with Eve's daughters,' was driven in his doomed ship upon the ocean. He tells in what manner he roamed for years, and did his

best to grasp what millions die believing, but only found Folly and Death ; 'Love, a fable long forgotten ; and Lust, poison'd honey.' Trying all creeds, all superstitions, customs, and conditions, all gods that men and women revere, he got the same answer everywhere—Death, Annihilation.

Looking into his face, the poet seems to see his own soul's reflection :

A spirit poison'd through and through,  
 Yet hungering for the sun and dew ;  
 A nature warp'd and wild, yet fraught  
 With agonies of piteous thought ;  
 A soul predoom'd to Death and Hate,  
 Yet eager to be saved and shriven—  
 A life so wholly desolate  
 It seem'd fierce irony of Fate  
 To mock it with one glimpse of Heaven !

For one hundred years Vanderdecken has kept a diary written in his own blood. This highly seasoned collection of writings he hands to the poet, with the remark that the Outcast was to find his salvation in the discovery of one woman prepared to give her soul that he she loved might live. Man, he granted, would be saved and proved immortal, could he thus be loved ; but woman is capable of much, though never of wholly losing for another all stake in human happiness for ever.

They'll love, and even accept damnation,  
 So they but hold their man the surer,  
 But absolute obliteration  
 Of self for his soul's preservation,  
 Demands diviner powers and purer.

Admit one soul from Self set free,  
 You prove Man's Immortality.

He holds forth in language, tuned to a sad bitterness, against the failure of Christ and all the world's dreamers, who played for Heaven, and failed to win it. He tells how he has gone further into despair in reading the last Philosophers than he was with the 'Logos' of St. John and Christ's pure Hûleh lily. He has read Comte and Harriet Martineau; studied Mill, and swallowed Congreve's 'patent pill to purge man's liver of Religion.' He has thumbed Frederic Harrison and John Morley, turned to the 'teacup tempests of Carlyle,' and been filled with wonder 'at divers dealers in cheap thunder'; read 'Daniel Deronda,' 'Leben Jesu,' and Renan's 'Vie'; vivisected with Lewes and Ferrier, and kissed, allured by Tyndall's brogue, 'the scientific blarney-stone,' and has talked with Bastian, Huxley, and Darwin:

Then finally, in sheer despair,  
 Burn'd deep with Scepticism's caustic,  
 Found Spencer staring at the air,  
 Crying, 'God knows if God is there!'  
 And in a trice, became agnostic!

His agnosticism gives him 'entrée' to England's best society, and with the Archbishop and the Cardinal he makes merry over the walnuts and the wine:

Found them agnostic to a man,  
 But doing all good fellows can  
 To make their crank old Ship, the Church,  
 Still staggering on with many a lurch,  
 Take in her sails and trim her anchor  
 Before the Storm swept down and sank her.

Diabolically sneering at every system, foul or

fair, he prattles on. Suddenly in the midst of his talk there comes from the sea a cry for his return. 'Once more adrift, lost in gloom, as lonely as a thunder-cloud, I fly, to face the blasts of doom !' and with this last wail of despair, the Outcast vanishes.

Here follows, tuned to English tongue, 'The Flights of Vanderdecken, sung by one whose soul oft seems to share his doom of darkness and despair.' 'Here, the Modern spirit holds the Book of Doubt, the Writ of Reason. This is the Modern who would, yet cannot, bend the knee.' 'How,' asks the poet, 'knowing all creeds, all wicked lore that puzzles thought and palsies feeling, shall he 'scape the apes of Darwin—how in this tearful world, tomb-paven, shall he find resting-place and haven ?'

How? By the magic which of old  
 Set yonder suns and planets spinning !  
 By that one warmth which ne'er grows cold,  
 By that one living Heart of gold  
 Which throbs and throb'd at Time's beginning !  
 By that which is, and still shall be,  
 In spite of all Philosophy !  
 From that we came, to that we go,  
 By that alone we live and are—  
 Core of the Rose whose petals blow  
 Beyond the farthest shining star !  
 Safe, despite Nature's cataclysm,  
 Sure, though the suns should cease to shine,  
 Love burns and flames through Thought's abysm,  
 Serene, mysterious, and divine !  
 One little word solves all creation,  
 Abides when Death and Time have passed—  
 Damn'd by the genius of Negation,  
 Man shall be saved by Love at last !

The first canto is entitled 'Madonna' and concerns itself with the Outcast's meeting with 'our

Lady of the Light, Mary Madonna, heavenly eyed.'

'More than a hundred years have fled since Philip Vanderdecken read Spinoza, and was damned.' Having pondered in a dark amaze the Demonstration Absolute which proves the Eternal One must be divorced from Personality, having pondered every cranny of the argument, he cries, 'Damn me for evermore, if any Personal God there be,' and calls on the Spirit of Creation 'to approve himself by his damnation.' This occurred off Cape Horn, on his vessel, a weather-beaten Dutchman with a crew of squat, fat, night-capp'd, hairy dogs of Dutchmen—'gruesome and guttural as hogs,' showing the trace of every sin that blurs the soul and stains the skin—the 'mate,' once a Professor of a college, having been brought to destitution by wine and women, after holding the chair of Moral Philosophy. A storm arises and wraps the ship with fury, till

A thin pale Hand of fluttering gold  
Stole through the clouds and silently  
Touch'd the wild bosom of the sea.

Page after page is taken up with Vanderdecken's musings and thoughts on Man, God, and Eternity, variated by an interview with a vision of the Madonna, who comes to offer him redemption. One year out of every ten, he is told, he will be suffered to leave his ship and wander amongst his fellow-men, so that he may find some gentle shape of womankind who shall love him and him alone, one content to share his loneliness and despair,

who shall from the fountain of her soul 'baptize his brows and make him whole.'

Here follow records of the dangers and trials through which the ship passes. Safely emerging from these, it comes at last to the First Haven, which is the 'mise en scène' of the second canto, sub-titled 'Natura Naturans.' Each canto needing a dedication, the poet runs over in his mind the various poets amongst the moderns to whom he might address his rhyme, and at last decides upon Herman Melville, the author of 'Typee,' to which book it is evident much of the contents of Canto II. owe their inspiration. The canto tells of one of the amours of Vanderdecken, and embodies a picture of nature naturing, a picture full of colour, and it must be said of fairly warm flesh tints, painted of course by Vanderdecken, and only reproduced by the poet:

A leaping, eddying, unabating  
Revel of flesh and blood pulsating—  
Now soft and sweet as fountains falling,  
Now mad and wild as billows bounding,  
Now murmurous as wood-doves calling,  
Now corybantic and appalling,  
And changeful as it was astounding!

We have not space to quote at any length from the various pictures of nature, and indicate the various moods which these suggest in the Outcast, or dwell on the peace of soul and mind which this love in the heart of loveland brings to the Wanderer. Aloha, the maiden, is a sweet, unselfish dream of passionate loveliness.

Of this canto we quote a passage which conveys much of its character:

Lo! while her<sup>1</sup> golden robe of day  
 Slips film by film and falls away,  
 Naked and warm she stands a space,  
 The sun-flush fading from her face;  
 Then, with bow'd head and soft hands prest  
 Upon her bare and billowing breast,  
 Takes, while the chill Moon steals in sight,  
 The cold ablation of the Night!  
 And then, as by the pools of rest  
 She lieth down subdued and blest,  
 As on her closed eyes are shed  
 Dim influence from the heavens o'erhead,  
 We nestling in her bosom close  
 Our feverish eyelids and repose—  
 Our spirits hush'd, our voices dumb,  
 Our little lives a little still'd,  
 We sleep!—and round us softly come  
 Souls from whose fountains ours are fill'd!  
 Spirits as soft as moonbeams flit  
 Around our rest, not breaking it,  
 Brushing across our lips and eyes  
 Wings wet with dews of Paradise!  
 While at God's mercy and at theirs  
 We lie, they bless us unawares,—  
 Watch the Soul's pool that lies within  
 The branches dark of Flesh and Sin,  
 And stir it as with Aaron's rod  
 To gleams of Heaven and dreams of God!

Lifting the filmy tent of Sleep  
 With gentle fingers, on us peep  
 Those errant angels, soft and tender  
 With some strange starlight's dusky splendour;  
 With balm from Heaven they bedew us,  
 Bring flowers from Heaven and hold them to us,  
 Flash on our eyes the diamonds shaken  
 To fairy rainbows as we waken,  
 And jubilantly ere departing  
 Ring those wild echoes in our ears,  
 Which, fush'd and from our pillows starting,  
 We hearken for with childish tears!

We learn much of the tragedy of the Outcast's  
 life; how, by the death of mother and wife, he  
 learned to curse the cruelty of a pitiless God; of

<sup>1</sup> The Earth.



his adventurous career, and more, in detail, of the never-ending joy of this restful sojourn, naturing 'with a simple maid who knew not sin.'

But 'tis the wooing and the winning, not the long end, but the beginning, that is the joy of love.' 'Ennui,' with his cold blind eyes, was soon facing the Outcast, and the old spirit of unrest returns, and with it, his bitterness against his God :

We feel too much, we know too little,  
We gaze behind us and before ;  
The magic wand of Faith, grown brittle,  
Breaks in our grasp ; our Dream is o'er !

Our love and hate have aims, but thine  
Are idle bolts at random hurl'd,  
Impotent, hidden, yet Divine,  
Brood o'er thy broken-hearted World !

Cold to the prayer of human sorrow,  
Deaf to the sob of human strife,  
Thou workest grandly, night and morrow,  
On Thy great Masterpiece of Life !  
For Thine own pleasure is it done,  
Since Art's delight is in the doing,  
Thine own enjoyment, slowly won,  
Is the sole end Thou art pursuing.

And yet, when the sense of joys return, the note is not entirely pessimistic :

The dim white Dove of Death is winging  
O'er Life's great flood in lonely flight,  
That sad black leaf of olive bringing  
To prove a hidden Land of Light !  
God, who created Earth and Heaven,  
Lord of the Dead thy love can save,  
Thy Bow still comforts the bereaven  
While Death wings on from wave to wave !  
Standing 'neath Sorrow's sunless pall  
We hail a symbol bright and blest,  
And by that sign know one and all  
That when these troubled Waters fall  
Our Ark on Ararat shall rest !

Then comes the tragic end of the child who  
knew no thought of pain :

A blossom, born to bloom and kiss,  
She open'd, then stole back again  
To Nature's elemental bliss ;

and the recall of the Outcast to his ship.

This concludes the first wanderings of Vanderdecken, the volume ending with a pathetic personal Interlude spoken by the poet, still optimist at heart, and, spite the dark and troubled Present, seeing lights that stir the clouds about, and still preserving his youth's illusion :

I Believe in God and Heaven and Love,  
And turning from Life's sorry sight,  
Watch starry lattices above  
Opening upon the waves of Night,—  
Find shapes divine and ever fair  
Thronging with radiant faces there,  
While hands of benediction wave  
O'er these wild waters of the grave.

To this is appended the beautiful *Fides Amantis*,  
from which we have had occasion to quote before.  
It ends thus :

I do believe that our salvation  
Lies in the little things of life,  
Not in the pomp and acclamation  
Of triumph, or in battle-strife,  
Not on the thrones where men are crown'd,  
Not in the race where chariots roll,  
But in the arms that clasp us round  
And hold us *backward* from the goal !  
In Love, not Pride ; in stooping low,  
Not soaring blindly at the sun ;  
In power to feel, not zeal to know ;  
Not in rewards, but duties done.

'Corollary: all gain is base,  
 The Victor's wreath, the Poet's crown,  
 If conquest in the giddy race  
 Means one poor struggler trampled down,  
 If he who gains the sunless throne  
 Of Fame, sits silent and alone,  
 Without Humanity to share  
 His happiness, or his despair !

'This Gospel I uphold, the one  
 The latter Adam comes to prove :  
 To every Soul beneath the sun  
 Wide open lies a Heaven of Love ;  
 But none, however free from sin,  
 However cloth'd in pomp and pride,  
 However fair, may enter in,  
 Without some Witness at his side,  
 To attest before the Judge and King  
 Vicarious love and suffering.  
 Who stands alone, shall surely fall !  
 Who folds the falling to his breast  
 Stands sure and firm in spite of all,  
 While angel-choirs proclaim him blest.'

Dearest and Best ! Soul of my Soul !  
 Life of my Life, kneel here with me !  
 Pray while the Storms around us roll,  
 That God may keep us frail, yet free !  
 Be Love our strength ! be God our goal !  
*Amen, et Benedicite !*

The rest of the strange flights of Vanderdecken have still to be published, but we learn from the title which precedes the first canto something of the scheme on which the 'rhyme' is conceived. 'Gentle Reader, read herein English'd and versified out of the Double Dutch, "The Strange Flight of Philip Vanderdecken," called "The Flying Dutchman," being a record of his amours in all climes and countries, his experiences of all complexions, his conversations with the great Goethe and other persons of reputation,

some still living ; his curious and often improper reflections on Men, Manners, and Morals, with a full, true, and particular account of his various religious opinions, the whole showing in a series of startling episodes how, having been damned by reading the philosophy of Spinoza, he was finally saved by the Love of a Woman.'

*AD LECTOREM.*

*Herein lies a Mystery,  
If you but knew it !  
Peruse this strange History—  
You 'll never see thro' it,  
Till Love learns your blunder  
And comes to assist you :  
When, smiling and weeping,  
With heart wildly leaping,  
You 'll find, to your wonder,  
God's Angels have kissed you !*

Four years later 'The Devil's Case' was put into literary shape by Mr. Buchanan, 'correctly stated, and diligently versified as a Bank Holiday Interlude,' with a warning on the very first page to the reader that, 'tho' I try to state it clearly, 'tis the Devil's Case, not mine !' The poem is written in what the author calls 'roguish, rhymeless stanzas—a rakish, rhymeless poem—and not in great heroic measures.' The perilous subject-matter, a mingling of jest and earnest, is treated in a manner 'jaunty, free, yet philosophic.'

*Sad it is, and yet its sadness,  
Trembles on the verge of laughter !*

It is the 'Great Original' that is here presented, not 'small inferior Devils, feeble, foolish mas-

queraders, outlaw'd by the cliques of Heaven, who for ever roll the Log and praise the Lord.' The evident sympathy between the interviewer and the interviewed is thus expressed :

Both began with warm approval  
Of the Church and ruling classes.  
*I was praised by the Spectator,*  
*He was orthodox and holy !*

Both have wholly fallen, yet still keep, as their proud possession, the power to stand erect :

Power to feel, and strength to suffer,  
Will to fight for Freedom only,  
Zeal to speak the truth within us,  
While the slaves of Heaven are dumb.

With a fear that the crowd may deem his interview blasphemous, he declares :

He alone blasphemes who smothers  
Truth his conscience bids him utter ;

and recalls the fact that he, Buchanan, spite of all his slips, has ever loathed the foul materialistic Serpent that surrounds the world. . . . From his earliest hours he was gazing at the stars.

I was wondering, I was dreaming,  
Speculating and aspiring,—  
Reaching hands and feeling backward  
To the secret founts of Being.

All the gods were welcome to me !  
All the heavens were wide and open !  
All the dreams of all the Dreamers  
In my heart's blood were pulsating !

Beautiful it was to wander  
In a glad green world, beholding  
Faith's celestial Jacob's Ladder  
Rainbow'd out 'tween Earth and Heaven.

And upon its shining Angels,  
Some descending, some ascending,  
Golden hair'd, with rosy faces  
Smiling on me as I walk'd.

Well those happy days were over,  
With the roses of the Maytime—  
One by one my youth's illusions  
Had been spirited away.

It is at Hampstead that the poet first meets the Devil. As he passes over the Heath, woe-ful shadows of departed men and women he had known when young seem to pass before him, none looking at him, but all seeming in a dark dream, lost in contemplation ; some smiling, some weeping ; the white-haired Father among them, the Madonna-like Mother, David Gray, 'bright-eyed, like the star of morning,' Roden Noel, and others, whose presence on the scene testifies again to the steadfast faithfulness of the poet, on which we have already had occasion to dwell. None of these shapes give him a sign, as he stands there with a void and aching heart, while

Far above, the lamps of Heaven  
Flicker'd in the breath of God.

Under the moon, 'that Naked Goddess,' he meets the Devil reading the latest (pink) edition of 'The Star,' 'clerically dress'd, bareheaded, spectacl'd.' To expressed surprise at his facility of sight, the Æon replies :

'Yes,' he said, benignly nodding,  
'I am blessed with goodly eyesight,  
Owing chiefly, like most blessings,  
To a strictly moral life.

He is absorbed in the human pageants that flit across the paper, the tales of war and slaughter, the records of the Bench and the Church, the camera of the Anarchy of Life, as well as the administration of all life's beauty, all life's wonder, and the solemn issues and glorious deeds that go with mighty causes. He knows that Progress, Culture, Church and State, Queen and Country, Party Rule, still are potent in the land.

'Shibboleths like these are precious  
Ev'n though one devours another,  
Though the shibboleth of white men  
Wrecks the shibboleth of black !

'Yet (you warn me) still the Dreamers  
Speak of God and point to Heaven !  
Still the spire, like Faith's bright finger,  
Points to some far Paradise !'

He reads aloud of shipwrecks, earthquakes, devastations, floods, cholera epidemics, railway accidents, and asks the poet to look on Nature, and hear the wailing of a million martyred beings, and tell him if the God he prays to 'cares one straw for human life.' The poet replies :

This they prove, and this thing only :  
Human life as we behold it,  
Is as nothing in the vision  
Of a larger Thought than ours ;

and declares that nothing can die ; and agreeing with him, the Devil adds that though life is eternal, all things personal must pass, and asks the poet to look at men, chasing the bubbles of pleasure, honour, reputation, gold, and women, and say if they are worthy of eternity.

God knows better—in Death's furnace  
Melts the dross for other uses.

'God?' he cried. 'If such a Ruler,  
Wise, Omnipotent, All-seeing,  
Had concerned Himself in making  
Worlds at all, and living creatures,

'He'd have made them wholly perfect,  
With no fuss of evolution . . . ;  
If there is a God, He blundered,—  
Man is here to set Him right !'

The poet is horrified, having up to this time regarded the speaker as a clergyman or priest, and in wrathful tones declares that God 'is' and works in His own fashion, and that ephemera 'fluttering for a breath, then fading, could not fathom the eternal glory of the God of all.'

In eloquent terms the Devil speaks of the free scattering of damnation on two-thirds of living things, and of the bloody chapters which history and the newspapers make in the world's volume ; of how city has followed city 'down the crater of damnation' ; of how for a space some fair type emerges, is approved of, and then crushed.

Greece, Rome, Egypt, thus have perish'd  
Yet the fires of Hell burn on.

Wroth at his blaspheming, the poet declares there is no Hell, save only conscience working deep within us, warning us against sin and evil ; the Devil answering :

'Sin is God's invention ;  
Often have I doubted Heaven,  
Never have I doubted Hell.  
Look around. Hell is, of all things  
Made by God, the one thing certain.'

He then proceeds to plead his case in detail,



complaining that he has been sadly traduced by the priests, prophets, and even the poets, and adding that he is the kindest-hearted creature in this Universe of Sorrow, and that his affection for mortals is the cause of all his woes.

'I've a case which, rightly stated,  
Must procure me an acquittal :  
Yes, the case for the Defendant  
Will astonish God Himself !

'God's my Judge, and cannot therefore  
As a witness speak against me ;  
God the Judge must be—the Jury  
Men of science and discretion.

'When they call the roll, you'll challenge  
All the slaves of superstition,—  
Fashionable priests and poets,  
And all military men ;

'Thieves and publishers and critics  
Shall be warn'd from off the jury,—  
Ev'n philosophers and pundits  
Must be keenly scrutinised.

'Politicians, Whig and Tory,  
Jewish, Christian, and Agnostic,  
Must be challenged—they are liars  
Both by practice and profession.

'Lastly, challenge all the prying  
Members of the County Council—  
Purulent things of all three sexes,  
Loathing Liberty and Light.'

The Devil speaks in tender, loving terms of the Christ, the well-beloved Son of Sorrow, holy, loving, great, and gracious, and like to him, an 'Outcast.'

'All thy goodly Dream is over,  
He who rules thy realm, my Jesus,  
Never wore thy crown of thorns.

'Not of *thee*, but of that other  
Who usurps thine Earthly kingdom,  
Spake I ; not of thee, my Jesus,  
But of him they name the Christ.'

He takes the poet to the silent city, to show him his kingdom. 'Wheresoever human creatures wail in anguish, is my kingdom!' And as he gazes on dead and dying, on the hollow eyes of famine, on the insane, on murder and disease, 'his features misted were with tears of pity falling from his woeful eyes,' while in piteous tones he charges God with creating Hell, and setting alight the fires of Pestilence, Disease, and Famine, adding :

'Thus, in spite of the Almighty,  
I have leaven'd its afflictions,  
Teaching men the laws of Nature,—  
Wisdom, Love, and Self-control.

'Every year the Hell-fires lessen,  
Every day the load is lighten'd,  
'Neath my care the very devils  
Grow benign and civilised !'

declaring that the pedant who avers that man's affliction came from eating the forbidden fruit was the Prince of liars, and that whosoever has eaten it 'has known his birthright and is free.' He tells of his practical efforts to improve the world's affairs, he being the father of science, most renowned in all the arts, and hygiene his youngest born.

"Take no heed about To-morrow,"  
Said the man-God, "do no labour,  
Be content with endless praying  
And eternal *laissez-faire*."

**' But the Devil, being wiser,  
Knows that he who fails to reckon  
With the morrow, will discover  
That To-morrow is To-day !**

**' And To-day is, now and ever,  
All Eternity or nothing—  
He who sits and twiddles fingers  
Now, hath done it evermore ! . . . '**

The Devil gives the poet a view of the world in its various actions, passes him over palaces and prisons, hospitals and brothels, over waters black with tempest, over battlefields, over famine-stricken countries, over cities foul with plague, over the plains and mines of Siberia :

**Everywhere the strong man triumphed !  
Everywhere the weak lay smitten !  
Everywhere the gifts of Godhead  
Rain'd on over-laden hands !**

Returning to the Heath, the Devil continues the story of his career, telling how in other days he had stood at the elbow of the Father, and had sung His praises until the evil hour when he wandered from His side to view Creation, and how at first His praise grew louder until he beheld His angels 'watching for His lifted finger creating and destroying.' Then his soul became wroth within him against all the needless suffering and pain of the world, and he cried forth his anger to his God. Cast forth into the abysses, and landing on the Earth, he opened his career by tempting the Woman :

**' Then I said (may Man forgive me !)  
Better far to know and suffer,  
Reach the stature of us angels,  
Than be happy like the beasts ;**

and declaring that he knew better than believe that 'Death was brought into the world out of sin and sorrow through that fruit forbidden,' knowing that Death was born in the beginning by the will of God the Father.

He speaks in sneering terms of the long processes of Evolution, 'now selecting' now rejecting, harking back and retrogressing,' and of how 'the Archetype was fashioned by perpetual vivisection, his passage to the Human being marked by swarms of martyr'd creatures.' Meanwhile, whilst the Nations were shadowed with the pestilential darkness of Death, and priests rose and made sacrificial offerings to God, the Devil was busy teaching mankind the useful arts :

'How to till the soil, to fashion  
Roofs of stone against the tempest,  
How to weave the wool for raiment,  
Yoke the monsters of the field ;

'Fire I brought them,—teaching also  
How to tame it to their uses,—  
Turning ironstone to iron,  
Frame the ploughshare and the sword ;

'Help'd by me they drain'd the marshes,  
Lopp'd the forest trees, and fashion'd  
Ships that floating on the waters  
Gather'd harvest from the Deep.'

Wherever superstition darkened Heaven and Earth he went, east and west—to Zoroaster, Buddha, Chiddi, speaking to them of light. Still people toiled, suffered, and died ; still the priests raved aloud and waited for wonders ; everywhere the senses of the people were blinded by signs

and miracles, whilst the Devil went on with his scholastic task of teaching the world hieroglyphics, architecture, the measurement of earth and water, and astronomy. He speaks of the fall of Paganism and the decay of Hellas under the sway of the Priests of God and Death :

*'Vain was all my strife for mortals !  
Vainly wrought my servant-angels !  
Vainly toll'd Asclepios, vainly  
Helen smiled, and Sappho sang !*

*'As a rainbow dies from Heaven,  
As a snow-white cloud of summer  
Breaks and fades, the pride of Hellas  
Brighten'd, melted, passed away !'*

Through the dark streams of Roman history we are piloted, with the Devil putting his case as against the All-Father; coming betimes to the shores of Galilee, where he found the 'king of poets and of dreamers,' to whom in the desert he points out his delusion. He tells how he was met with the reply, *Σατανᾶ, ὁπίσω μου*; and then in glowing rage he declares that the promises He fathered have turned into dust, and yet live and multiply as lies, while he, the Devil, has gone on preaching his doctrines of enlightenment :

*" " Pass from knowledge on to knowledge  
Ever higher and supremier,  
Clothe these bones with power and pity,  
Live and love, altho' ye die !*

*" " Fear not, love not, and revere not  
What transcends your understanding !  
Keep your reverence and affection  
For the brethren whom ye know ! " "*

Meanwhile he is busy with his first great attack

on the Church and darkness, the invention of printing, persuading first a learned monk to transcribe his carnal books, and then, fashioning tiny blocks of wood, ranged them patiently in order, 'smeared them o'er with ink from Hades, stamped the words on leaves papyric,' and so the miracle was done.

'First I printed (mark my cunning !)  
God's own Book, the Christian Bible,  
Turn'd it out in fine black letter,  
So that he who ran might read !

'Thus, observe, I pinn'd the churchmen  
Down to very verse and chapter !  
Thus, Sir, for the good times coming,  
I was nailing Lie on Lie !'

Then suddenly arose man's new tree of good and evil, and light and liberty were born ! Larger and larger it grew despite the shrieks of the Popes and Churchmen. 'Lop it ! cut it down ! destroy it ! Shun that leafage diabolic. Ware that wicked fruit of knowledge,' croaked the raven of the Churches. But the whole world became full of the joy of the new blessing. The magic runes of Norseland, the Tales of Troy, Shepherd's songs of yore, became the common gift of mankind, and Fairyland seemed once more ; even the monks in the monastery garden 'slyly sow'd the seedlings of the tree.'

And since that day the fight between Church and Devil has lasted.

'I it was who put the honey  
On the tongue of Ariosto !  
I who cast a light from Heaven  
On Boccaccio's golden page !

'In the ear of many a monarch  
I was whispering my reasons—  
Taught by me, your bluff King Harry  
Faced the Pope and flay'd the cowls !'

Proceeding, the Devil tells of his second great 'coup,' the upraising of the 'Drama,' 'still by priestcraft shunn'd and curst'; at first bribing monks to help him by the production of miracle plays. Then arose the Devil's temple, 'The Theatre,' sunny as the soul of Nature, fearless, beautiful, and free :

"Shun it ! shun the Devil's dwelling !"  
Shriek'd the jealous cowls ; but straightway,  
Loud, the prelude of the battle,  
Thunder'd Marlowe's mighty line !

'There I taught your gentle Shakespeare  
What no shaven monk could teach him—  
Mingled wit and wisdom, foreign  
To a God who never smiles !

'Churchmen curst, and still are cursing  
What transcends their sermonising,  
Hating, in the way of traders,  
Rival shops with smarter wares.'

In his Temple rose the voices of the Seers and Merry-makers, Song-makers and Romancers. Following came another 'coup,' the invocation of the Story-tellers—Cervantes, Fielding, Sterne, Dickens, Charles Reade—all of whom 'struck the rock of human knowledge, and freed the founts of fun, still foreign to a God who never laughs.'

In rapid succession the Devil gives us pictures of Voltaire, the darling son of his adoption, Condorcet, Diderot, day by day waging the war of

the Devil of Light against the God of Popes and Bibles; and in passing we are given an indication of the horrors of the French Revolution :

'Midst that carnage all the cruel  
Parasites of God were busy,—  
IGNORANCE, his page-in-waiting,  
DEATH, his master of the hounds !'

the Devil proclaiming loud throughout the world that Salvation abides in ourselves and not in God.

Then the Devil takes upon him the invention of the Newspaper :

'Gainst the Church's red battalions  
Rose at last the thin black line !  
Nought that Priests and Tyrants plotted,  
Nought that mortals did or suffer'd,  
Nought that passes on this planet,  
Any more remained in darkness !'

'On the walls of hut and palace flamed thy messages to mortals, all the affairs of Hell and Heaven being recorded, even to the doings in the Vatican' :

'For the first time human creatures  
Knew the affliction of their fellows—  
Tyrants blush'd to find recorded  
Deeds they had not blush'd to do !

'Nought that God had done in darkness  
Could escape his circumspection !  
All the evils God created  
Now were patent to the world !'

and this boast arouses a vigorous protest from the poet as to the prying and denying which makes nothing sacred to eyes profane; to which the



Devil replies that in a scheme so democratic, individual merit fails, and that with all its limitations the Press is a boon to mankind :

' By the printed words, the record  
Of the conscience of the people,  
By my clamouring Printer's Devil,  
Freedom spreads from land to land :

' Deeds of night no more are hidden,  
Deeds of grace are multiplying ;  
Light into the dungeon flowing  
Strikes the fetters of the slave.

' At my printed protestation  
On his throne the Tyrant trembles :  
Words of hope, for Freedom utter'd,  
Shake the footstool of the Czar !'

From this point the Devil gives us picturesque records of his work in unfolding to man all the story of Creation, Birth, Death, and Evolution ; of his revelation of the arts and sciences by God forbidden, not forgetting the rise and growth of medicine and surgery, and the general opening of the eyes of Man to the sense of his own dignity, and of the cruelty and tyranny of God the Father as personified in Nature and its Evolution. 'What avails,' he cries, 'a bliss created out of hecatombs of evil, out of endless years of pain? Thus,' he says, 'throughout the ages o'er the world my feet have wandered, watching in eternal pity endless harvest-fields of Death' :

' All the tears of all the martyrs  
Fall'n in vain for Man's redemption !  
All the souls of all the singers  
Dumb for ever in the grave !

'Ants upon an ant-heap, insects  
Of the crumbling cells of coral,  
Coming ever, ever going,  
Race on race has lived and died.'

He declares that God has been deaf to all the wails and the weeping, blind to all the woes of being, and that neither praise nor prayer nor lamentation availeth before the blind, pitiless, sure, Eternal Law :

'Waste no thought on the Almighty ;  
Seek, with all thy soul's endeavour,  
How to make thine earthly dwelling  
Bright and fair, in God's despite !

'Only for a day thou livest !  
Make that day, so quickly fleeting,  
For thyself, for all thou lovest,  
Beautiful with Light and Joy !'

And as he vanishes, asking not to be called the Prince of Evil, but the Prince of Pity, since he alone has wept for human woes, and worked for human amelioration, the poet ends :

Tell the truth and shame the Devil !  
Tell it, even tho' it praise him !  
Tell the truth for the Defendant,  
Tho' the Accuser be thy God !

Better still—let the Defendant  
Plead his Case in his own person :  
Tho' it means thine own damnation  
Let the awful truth prevail ! . . .

Yet, alas ! that happy Eden !  
All the golden, gladsome Garden !  
God the Father smiling on us,  
Raining gentle blessings down !

The volume ends with a Litany, 'De Profundis,' in which prayers are offered up for light and happiness, and deliverance from Wars, Murders,

and Deaths, from Liars and those who would deaden Truth. The following is a sample of the invocations :

Father, which art in Heaven, not here below !  
Be Thy Name hallowèd, in that place of worth !  
And till Thy Kingdom cometh, and we know,  
Be Thy will done more tenderly on earth !  
Since we must live, give us our daily bread !  
Forgive our stumblings, since Thou mad'st us blind !  
If we offend Thee, Lord, at least forgive  
As tenderly as we forgive our kind.  
Spare us temptation, human or divine !  
Deliver us from evil, now and then !  
The Kingdom, Power, and Glory all are Thine  
For ever and for evermore. Amen.

Mr. Buchanan introduces us again to his Prince of Pity, his Æon, his Devil, in 'The New Rome,' which is an attempt at a satire on the times. This originated in a suggestion of Mr. Herbert Spencer's, who had written thus to the poet: 'There is an immensity of matter calling for strong denunciation and display of white-hot anger, and I think you are well capable of dealing with it. More especially, I want some one who has the ability, with sufficient intensity of feeling, to denounce the miserable hypocrisy of our religious world, with its pretended observances of Christian principles, side by side with the abominations which it habitually assists and countenances. In our political life, too, there are multitudinous things which invite the severest castigation—the morals of party strife, and the ways in which men are, with utter insincerity, sacrificing their convictions for the sake of political and social position.' 'Urged by this great

authority,' writes the poet, 'I did attempt to write a satire, but I soon found that I lacked the necessary equipment, and was drifting into mere imitation of defunct masters. Moreover, I was only pretending to be in a passion. In point of fact, I had no "hate" in me; I was too disheartened and sad, and too sorry for poor Humanity. The longer I lived, too, the more clearly I saw the hopelessness of mere denunciation. Rating priests and politicians for their inadequacy was simply repeating one of the very few blunders made by the gentlest and most benign of philanthropists. It was cursing the Barren Fig Tree.'

Beside the experience of the Devil in 'The New Rome,' he reappears to our observation in 'The Devil's Sabbath' in the same volume, which has for an ending the following epode :

This is the Song the glad stars sung when first the Dream began,  
This is the Dream the world first knew when God created Man,  
This is the Voice of Man and God, blent (even as mine and thine !)  
Where'er the soul of the Silence wakes to the Love which is  
Divine !

How should the Dream depart and die, since the Life is but its  
beam ?

How should the Music fade away, since the Music is the Dream ?  
How should the Heavens forget their faith, and the Earth forget its  
prayer,

When the Heavens have plighted troth to Earth, and the Love  
Divine is there ?

The Song we sing is the Starry Song that rings for an endless  
Day,

The endless Day is the Light that dwells on the Love that passeth  
away,

The Love that ever passeth away is the Love (like thine and  
mine !)

That evermore abideth on in the heart of the Love Divine !

## CHAPTER XI

### 'THE NEW ROME'

The volume which bears the title of 'The New Rome' embodies in a remarkable way the poet's views on most of the questions that have concerned him in his outlook on life and in his prognostications of death and eternity. With a writer whose mental and spiritual history has been one of steady evolution, the last word is merely a more highly developed, a more keenly tempered first word, and the final outlook, though taken from a higher pinnacle than that from which the first glimpse is taken, yet embraces, with an altered perspective, the earlier view. This metaphor, of course, is only correct in so far as we bear in mind the changes made by thought and environment on the seeing eye and the reflecting soul.

'I end as I began' is the confession of the poet—not in method of thought, nor in method of expression, but in tendency and in belief.—What was first vague, wrapt in a cloud of doubt and hesitation, became definite and clear. The veil has been gradually thinned, though never lifted, and the face within, at least, may be known to

be there. Little by little the nebulosity weaved by what we call conscience (which often is merely a mental habit, attained by custom) round the sight and the ideas, with the expression of them, was spirited away by the eclecticism of the poet; one by one the barnacles which clung to his ship of thought were cleared away, and, however far from the mark the poet is in discerning the secret of Nature and the secret of creation and of life, the note is always honest, direct, and uncompromising.

When first I learnt to know  
The common strife of all,  
My boy's heart shared the woe  
Of those who fall and fall;  
For all the weak and poor  
My tears of pity ran,  
And still they flow, e'en more  
Than when my life began.

The creeds I've cast away  
Like husks of garner'd grain,  
And of them all this day  
Does never a creed remain  
Save *this*, blind faith that God  
Evolves thro' martyr'd Man:  
Thus, the long journey trod,  
I end as I began!

I dream'd when I began  
I was not born to die,  
And in my dreams I ran  
From shining sky to sky;  
And still, now life grows cold  
And I am grey and wan,  
That infant's Dream I hold,  
And end as I began!

The volume before us is truly a confession of

Faith, and in many ways the best epitome of the poet's passions, feelings, and powers that he has given to the world. The old sympathy for the weak and oppressed, the hatred of wars, the hatred of lust, the joy in mere living, the godhead of personal manhood, the hatred of shams, the hatred of intellectual trimming, the scorn of priests and pedants, the cry against a pitiless God-Father, and the heart-breaking sympathy for the sleepless Dreamer of Dreams, all are evidenced here.

He ends as he began in more ways than one. His first volume was dedicated to David Gray. The dedication to 'The New Rome' is 'To David in Heaven,' thirty years after :

Lone and weary-hearted  
I think of days departed,  
The shining hope, the golden lure, that led our footsteps on !  
That led me even hither  
To Night and isolation,  
That crowns me with a weary crown of a sunless aspiration !  
All I plead and pray for  
Is one glimpse of Maytime,—  
The light of Morning on the fields of the flower-time and the play-  
time !

Better cease as *you* did !  
Star-eyed, divinely-mooded,  
Hoping, dreaming, passioning, fronting the fiery East !  
Better die in gladness,  
Than watch in utter sadness  
The lights of Heaven put slowly out, like candles at a feast !  
You emerge victorious,  
We remain bereaven :  
Better to die than live the heirs of an empty Earth and Heaven !

Ah, the dream, the fancy !  
No power, no necromancy,  
Peoples Heaven's thrones again or stirs the poet-through !

Nought can bring unto me  
You who loved and knew me,  
The boy's belief, the morning-red, the Maytime and the  
Song—  
Faintly up above me  
Winter bells ring warning—  
Ay me! the Spring, when we were young, at the golden gates of  
Morning!

But the final note of the poet is not one entirely of despair. He cannot cry that 'God's in His heaven, all's right with the world'; but he knows that there is still 'the glad deep music of creation abiding, though men depart,' and that though the sternness of God is inexorable, the love of a mother is tender and eternal. His belief in mankind is as firm as ever:

In this dark world  
What moves my wonder most is, not that Man  
Is so accurst and warp'd from heavenly love,  
But that, despite the pitfalls round his feet,  
He falls into so few,—despite the hate  
And anarchy of Nature, echoed on  
In his own heartbeats, he can love so much!  
He stumbles, being blind; he eateth dust,  
Being fashion'd out of dust; flesh, he pursues  
The instincts of the flesh; but evermore  
He, struggling upward from the slough of shame,  
Confronts the Power which made him miserable  
And stands erect in love, a living Soul!

Out of the chaos of Night—which is really the despair which arises from the embracing of the letter and not the spirit of the law—'suns shall rise though many a sun hath set,' and the last word that God can speak to an anxious world will be 'Love'—the solving word of all creation, without which the orient beams



of light will freeze the soul on the brink of eternity.

The volume is divided into various parts, of which 'Songs of Empire' is the first. With notable fearlessness as of old, the poet faces the current and swims against the stream of popular tendencies with regard to Empire. At the very moment when the spirit of Imperialism tops the highest wave of the sea of contemporary political thought, he boldly asserts his political eclecticism, and suspects some of our aspirations and methods. This is not an uncommon position for a poet to assume, although as a rule there is an evident silence which is termed poetical reticence, but which by some is not designated by such a charitable title. Whilst the poet of the Empire sings of rampant Imperialism and the virtue of strength, and is the singer of the hour, Mr. Buchanan recalls ancient theories of liberty, and sings the Song of the Slain.

The first song is characteristic enough, and indicates the regardless, sweeping step that strength takes in the economy of the world—in other words, 'The Lord Marching on':

Awake, awake, ye Nations, now the Lord of Hosts goes by !  
Sing ye His praise, O happy souls, who smile beneath the sky !  
Join in the song, O martyr'd ones, where'er ye droop and die !  
The Lord goes marching on !

'Mid tramp and clangour of the winds, and clash of clouds that meet,  
He passeth on His way and treads the Lost beneath His feet ;  
His legions are the wing'd Storms that follow fast and fleet  
Their Master marching on !

And in a later effort the poet contrasts the stern

omnipotence, that shows no mercy, of God the Father, with the human tenderness and pity that are the hallmarks of human endeavour :

If I were a God like you, and you were a man like me,  
And in the dark you prayed and wept and I could hear and see,  
The sorrow of your broken heart would darken all my day,  
And never peace or pride were mine till it was smiled away,—  
I'd clear my Heaven above your head till all was bright and blue,  
If you were a man like me, and I were a God like you !

If I were a God like you, and you were a man like me,  
Small need for those my might had made to bend the suppliant knee ;  
I'd light no lamp in yonder Heaven to fade and disappear,  
I'd break no promise to the Soul, yet keep it to the ear !  
High as my heart I'd lift my child till all his dreams came true,  
If you were a man like me, and I were a God like you !

He then bemoans the fall of the glory of the Modern Rome, 'Where is the glory that once was Rome, where are the laurels the Cæsar wore?' and he sees in the modern forum the Christ who is the God of to-day, not Baal, but Christus-Jingo.

His Song of Jubilee is written, not to the tune of patriotic jubilation in all that we glory in, but in a minor key of despair in the growth of the worst aspects of Imperialism and Stock-Exchange commerce, which seems to raise the hope of the nation, yet oppresses the soul of the poet.

'The thin red line was doubtless fine as it crept across the plain,  
While the thick fire ran from the black Redan and broke it again  
and again,

But the hearts of men throb'd bravely then, and their souls could  
do and dare,

'Mid the thick of the fight, in my despite, God found out Heroes  
there !

The Flag of England waved on high, and the thin red line crept on,  
And I felt, as it flashed along to die, my occupation gone !

O'er a brave man's soul I had no control in those old days,' said he,

'So I've turned myself, ere laid on the shelf, to a Charter'd  
Companie !

'The Flag of England still doth blow and flings the sunlight back,  
But the line that creepeth now below is changed to a line of black !  
Wherever the Flag of England blows, down go all other flags,  
Wherever the line of black print goes, the British Bulldog brags !  
The Newspaper, my dear, is best to further such work as mine,—  
My blessing rest, north, south, east, west, on the thin black penny-  
a-line !

For my work is done 'neath moon or sun, by men and not by me,  
Now I 've changed myself, in the reign of the Guelph, to a Charter'd  
Companie !

'The Flag of England may rot and fall, both Church and State may  
end,  
Whatever befall, I laugh at it all, if I pay a dividend !'

This is not Mr. Buchanan's own 'Devil' who sings the song, but Belial, a very different person, with whom the poet is not even on bowing terms. The same distaste of the commercial spirit in war is found in that subtle piece of humour, 'The Ballad of Kiplingson,' whose very title suggests the metre and spirit of the rhyme. The following quotation will give some idea of the character of this parody :

'For the Lord my God was a Cockney Gawd, whose voice was a  
savage yell,  
A fust-rate Gawd who dropt, d'ye see, the 'h' in Heaven and Hell !

'Alas, and alas,' the good Saint said, a tear in his eye serene,  
'A Tory at twenty-one ! Good God ! At fifty what *would* you have  
been ?

'There 's not a spirit now here in Heaven who wouldn't at twenty-one  
Have tried to upset the very Throne, and reform both Sire and Son !'

Despite his pessimism, there is no evidence that the poet breathes anything but the patriotic spirit, yet his patriotism is tuned to a key rather foreign to the intelligence manufactured under our modern imperialistic environment. His hatred

of the sword will not be modified. In this he remains the poet of old. Expediency to him in such a question as this is a vulgar, dishonest shibboleth.

Not love thee, dear old Flag ? not bless  
 This England, sea and shore ?  
 O England, if I loved thee less  
 My song might praise thee more,—  
 I'd have thee strong to right the wrong,  
 And wise as thou art free;  
 For thee I'd claim a stainless fame,  
 A bloodless victory !

Not love the dear old Flag ? not bless  
 Our England, sea and shore ?  
 O England, those who love thee less  
 May stoop to praise thee more.  
 To keep thy fame from taint of shame  
 I pray on bended knee,  
 But where the braggart mouths thy name  
 I hail no victory !

To most of us, philosophers or otherwise, the doctrines of strength and success are the doctrines of nature and of expediency, but the poet is of another mind. It is not the flag of victory that concerns him most, it is not the victor in the struggle. His is the 'Song of the Slain,' the song of the vanquished; not when 'slain' or 'vanquished' under the white flag of freedom, or upheld by hands with blood unstained, but when found under the black flag, which to the poet's eye seems to wave wherever greed and mere desire for Empire is the motive force of war :

This is the Song of the Weak  
 Trod 'neath the heel of the Strong !  
 This is the Song of the hearts that break  
 And bleed as we ride along,—

From sea to sea we singing sweep, but this is the slain man's Song !

And while the gospel of the strong right arm is preached, the gospel of the triumph of mere animal superiority, the poet reminds mankind that it was not alone the mighty arm and the keen ear and eye that compassed the mighty things of the past :

'We are men in a world of men, not gods !' the Strong Man cried ;  
 'Yea men, but more than men,' the Dreamer of Dreams replied ;  
 'Tis not the mighty Arm (the Lion and the Bear have that),  
 'Tis not the Ear and the Eye (for those hath the Ounce and the Cat),  
 'Tis not the form of a Man upstanding erect and free,  
 For this hath the forest Ape, yea the face of a Man hath he ;  
 'Tis not by these alone, ye compass'd the mighty things,  
 Hew'd the log to a ship, till the ship swept out on wings,  
 Ye are men in a world of men, lord of the seas and streams,  
 But ye dreamed ye were more than men when ye heark'd to the  
 Dreamers of Dreams !

And the Dream begat the Deed, and grew with the growth of the  
 years,

So ye were the Builders of Earth, but *we* were the Pioneers !

'We are men in a world of men, not gods,' the Strong Man cried ;  
 'Then woe to thy race and thee,' the Dreamer of Dreams replied ;  
 'The Tiger can fight and feed, the Serpent can hear and see,  
 The Ape can increase his kind, the Beaver can build, like thee.  
 Have I led thee on to find thee of all things last and least,  
 A Man who is only a Man, and therefore less than a beast ?  
 Who bareth a red right arm, and crieth, "Lo, I am strong !"  
 Who shouts to an empty sky a savage triumphal song,  
 Who apes the cry of the woods, who crawls like a snake and lies,  
 Who loves not, neither is loved, but crawleth a space and dies,—  
 Ah, woe indeed to the Dream that guided thee all these years,  
 And woe to the Dreamers of Dreams who ran as thy Pioneers !'

His sympathy and love for animals is expressed strongly in the poems 'The Man with the Red Right Hand,' and 'The Song of the Fur Seal,' a sympathy he expressed in rather exaggerated language in 'The City of Dream.' His love of peace is the 'motif' of the poem 'Peace not a Sword,' and his distaste for the boastful

voices which cry aloud in verse of deeds about which Heroes of old were silent, is expressed vividly in 'Hark now, what fretful Voices':

The Hero then was silent,  
The Martyr then was dumb;

for glory is wrought through deeds of heroes,  
'not shrieks of Chanticleer.'

'Songs of Empire' conclude with 'The Last Bivouac':

No sound disturbs those camps so chill,  
No banner waves, no clarions ring,—  
Imperial Death sits cloak'd and still  
With eyes turned eastward, listening  
To that great throng  
Which sweeps along  
With battle-cry and thunder tread,  
To join the bivouacs of the Dead!

Sentinel-stars their vigil keep!  
The hooded Spectre sitteth dumb,  
While still to join the Hosts asleep  
The Legions of the Living come:  
'Neath Heaven's blue arch  
They march and march,  
Ever more silent as they tread  
More near the bivouacs of the Dead.

In the second division, 'Thro' the Great City,' we are brought to face again many of those realities of misery which the 'London Poems' suggested. The poet's gift of tears is nowhere stronger than when in the gloom of mean streets, and under the shadow of vice and crime he discerns the pathos and tragedy of feeble lives struggling with the master powers of sin, temptation, and disease. 'The Sisters of Midnight,' who are those lost

women whose very existence lessens the possibility of danger to others—‘the lost who die that you may live’—are painted in words which deaden the soul with despair for the misery and the hopelessness of the whole social scheme. Take one passage from ‘Annie, or the Waif’s Jubilee,’ which appears under the sub-title of ‘The Last Christians.’ We echo the poet’s cry, Can these things be, and men still say that Hell is but a dream?

... Who hath not seen her, on dark nights of rain,  
 Or when the Moon is chill on the chill street,  
 Creeping from shade to shade in grief and pain,  
 Showing her painted cheeks for man’s disdain  
 And wrapt in woe as in a winding-sheet?  
 Sin hath so stain’d it none may recognise  
 The face that once was innocent and fair,  
 And hollow rings are round the hungry eyes,  
 And shocks of grey replace the golden hair;  
 And all her chance is, when the drink makes blind  
 The foulest and the meanest of mankind,  
 To hide her stains and force a hideous mirth,  
 And gain her body’s food the old foul way—  
 Ah, loathsome dead sea fruit that eats like earth,  
 Her mouth is foul with it both night and day!  
 So that corruption and the stench of Death  
 Consume her body and pollute her breath,  
 And all the world she looks upon appears  
 A dismal charnel-house of lust and tears!  
 Sick of the horror that corrupts the flesh,  
 Tangled in vice as in a spider’s mesh,  
 Scenting the lazar-house, in soul’s despair,  
 She sees the gin-shop’s bloodshot eyeballs glare,  
 And creepeth in, the feverish drug to drain  
 That blots the sense and blinds the aching brain;  
 And then with feeble form and faltering feet  
 Again she steals into the midnight street,  
 Seeks for her prey, and woefully takes flight  
 To join her spectral sisters of the Night!

And with this take a passage from ‘Sisters of Midnight,’ and with eyes wide open to what

may be seen at every step we take in the very heart of the Modern Rome—ay, in Modern Anywhere—let us decide if the indication here is drawn on too strong lines :

Poisonous paint on us, under the gas,  
Smiling like spectres, we gather bereaven ;  
Leprosy's taint on us, ghost-like we pass,  
Watch'd by the eyes of yon pitiless Heaven !  
Let the stars stare at us ! God, too, may glare at us  
Out of the Void where He hideth so well . . .  
Sisters of Midnight, He damn'd us in making us,  
Cast us like carrion to men, then forsaking us,  
Smiles from His throne on these markets of Hell !

Laugh ! Those who turn from us, too, have their price !  
*There*, for the proud, other harlots are dressing,  
*They* too may learn from us man's old device—  
Food for his lust, with some sham of a blessing !  
Sons of old Adam there buy the fine madam there,  
Bid with a coronet,—yea, or a crown !  
Sisters, who'd envy the glory which graces them ?  
They, too, are sold to the lust which embraces them,  
Ev'n in the Church, with the Christ looking down !

Of other divisions of this volume, 'Latter-day Gospels' views, for us, much of the spirit and tendencies of many of our later prophets. Of these, 'Justinian' is evidently inspired by the example of the two Mills. The 'New Buddha' lets us into the spirit of Schopenhauer, whilst there are poems on Nietzsche and 'The Lost Faith.'

The volume is also enriched by half a dozen Land and Sea Songs, of which 'The Mermaid' is a splendid piece of broad comedy, and written evidently to be sung.

Interest is also added by the fact that many of the poems are addressed in a personal note to



contemporaries and others, chiefly in the world of letters.—Tennyson :

Dear singing Brother, who so long  
Wore Galahad's white robe of Fame,  
And kept it stainless like thy name  
Thro' dreary days of doubting song ;

Who blest the seasons as they fell,  
Contented with the flowers they bring,  
Nor soar'd to Heaven on Milton's wing,  
Nor walked with Dante's ghost thro' Hell,

Heine :

Full of flowers are his eager hands  
As by Eve or Lilith he lies caressed,  
But he laughs ! and they turn to ashes and sands,  
As he rains them upon her breast !

Nothing he spares 'neath the sad blue Heaven,  
All he mocks and regards as vain ;  
Nothing he spares—not his own love even,  
Or his own despair and pain !

Zola :

There 's Zola, grimy as his theme,  
Nosing the sewers with cynic pleasure,  
Sceptic of all that poets dream,  
All hopes that simple mortals treasure.

Ibsen :

There 's Ibsen puckering up his lips,  
Squirming at Nature and Society,  
Drawing with tingling finger-tips  
The clothes off naked Impropriety !

Walt Whitman :

The noblest head 'neath Western skies,  
The tenderest heart, the clearest eyes,  
Are thine, my Socrates, whose fate  
Is beautifully desolate !

**Kipling :**

Come, Kipling, with thy soldiers three,  
Thy barrack-ladies frail and fervent,  
Forsake thy themes of butchery  
And be the merry Muses' servant !

**Robert Burns :**

God bless him ! Tho' he sinn'd and fell,  
His sins are all forgiven,  
Since with his wit he conquer'd Hell  
And with his love show'd Heaven !  
He was the noblest of us all,  
Yet of us all a part,  
For every Scot, howe'er so small,  
Is high as BURNS'S heart !

**Thomas Hardy :**

Shepherd, God bless thy task, and keep thee strong  
To help poor lambs that else might die astray ! . . .  
Thy midnight cry is holier than the song  
The summer uplands heard at dawn of day !

**Henry James :**

Tell James to burn his continental  
Library of the Detrimental,  
And climb a hill, or take a header  
Into the briny, billowy seas,  
Or find some strapping Muse and wed her.

**Professor Blackie :**

Confound your croakers and drug concoctors !  
I've sent them packing at last, you see !  
I'm in the hands of the best of doctors,  
Dear cheery and chirpy Doctor B. !

And in fine Gilbertian swing the poet puts  
these rhymes into the mouth of the 'Essential  
Christian,' with whom he came into literary

contact at the time of the publication of 'The Wandering Jew':

If I desire to end my days at peace with all theologies,  
To win the penny-a-liner's praise, the Editor's apologies,  
Don't think I mean to cast aside the Christian's pure beatitude,  
Or cease my vagrant steps to guide with Christian prayer and  
platitude.

No, I'm a Christian out and out, and claim the kind appellation  
Because, however much I doubt, my doubts are simply Relative ;  
For this is law, and this I teach, tho' some may think it vanity,  
That whatsoever creed men preach, 'tis Essential Christianity !

In Miracles I don't believe, or in Man's Immortality—  
The Lord was laughing in his sleeve, save when he taught  
Morality ;

He saw that flesh is only grass, and (tho' you grieve to learn it) he  
Knew that the personal Soul must pass and never reach Eternity.  
In short, the essence of his creed was gentle nebulousity  
Compounded for a foolish breed who gaped at his verbosity ;  
And this is law, and this I teach, tho' you may think it vanity,  
That whatsoever creed men preach, 'tis Essential Christianity !

I freely tippie Omar's wine with ladies scant of drapery,  
I think Mahomet's Heaven fine, though somewhat free and  
capery ;

I feel a great respect for Joss, although he's none too beautiful !  
To fetiches, as to the Cross, I'm reverent and dutiful ;  
I creep beneath the Buddhist's cloak, I beat the tom-tom cheerily,  
And smile at other Christian folk who take their creed too drearly ;  
For this is law, and this I teach aloud to all Gigmanity,  
That whatsoever creed men preach, 'tis Essential Christianity !

To all us literary gents the future life's fantastical,  
And both the Christian Testaments are only wrote sarcastical ;  
They're beautiful, we all know well, when viewed as things  
poetical,

But all their talk of Heaven and Hell is merely theoretical.  
But we are Christian men indeed, who, striking pious attitudes,  
Raise on a minimum of creed a maximum of platitudes !  
For this is law, and this we teach, with grace and with urbanity,  
That whatsoever creed men preach, 'tis Essential Christianity !

Satire is no stranger to Robert Buchanan.

## CHAPTER XII

### CONCLUSION—MR. BUCHANAN'S SIGNIFICANCE

It is expedient, occasionally, for the wisest man to recall some of the commonplaces upon which he built his wisdom, and one of these is the truth that all criticism of literature and of life must depend upon the point of view. Not that we are to be blinded by the heresy, that every point of view conveys an equally good perspective of the Truth, and that one view is only better in a very comparative sense than another; but it is necessary to estimate not only the capacity of seeing aright, and the elevation from which the sight is taken, but also what the view is chiefly meant to incorporate and interpret. The scientist, with cold eye bent upon the minutiae of living things and of morbid products, interprets life and its decadences and evolutions in the light of phenomena. It is his duty to record facts. He may go further and join with those we call the philosophers, and enumerate principles, but the principles he is concerned with reach no further than the outer gates of the supreme λόγος, the governing spirit of Nature, the God of the worlds.

The mystery within he leaves to the Poets and the Dreamers. The Poets may not have strong enough wings to fly upwards to the golden gates, and then they are content to be mere birds, singing in the ears of the flowers or chanting an inspiring note in the bright beams, which, flashing from the gates above, are spent on the earth below. But to others, Life is viewed on none so inspiring levels. To some it is '*vanitas vanitatum*,' philosophising on it, unworthy of the higher energies, the higher mentality of man. To others, the whole Book of Life is already writ under the eye of Authority and Tradition, and there is no Truth beyond its age-worn bindings. To the cynic, 'the world is a bundle of hay, mankind the asses that pull'; to the mere man of muscle, it is a vantage-ground for physical struggle; to the weak, only a place where sooner or later one has to die. There are many who view life merely as an antechamber to death, like Browning, 'counting life just a stuff to try the soul's strength on,' with the danger of making life a process of dying; to others again, the whole problem has to be solved in this world, before the passing into forgetfulness. The evidence of Nature teaches the serious thinker to uphold one of three distinct points of view. First, that the principle of Nature is the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest, and that it is right that the strong should accede to their lawful heritage; 'that men are men in a world of men, not gods.' Second, that an understanding

of this principle necessitates a moral recognition of the fact that the whole energy of humanity should be spent in assisting the weak in their competition with the strong, and here enter the religious systems of the world, especially that of Christianity. And third, that the Truth of the matter is reached, as Aristotle put it, by a balance of contraries.

It is extremely difficult to take more than a partial view of Truth, a partial view of Life. The greater philosophers, with their brains at white heat, strive to attain it with some success; but however clear the point of sight, however free from astigmatism the mental lens, the view must remain partial, and in more senses than one arbitrary. Even though temperamental, racial, and class tendencies be inhibited, or modified, or at least controlled in the economies of actual life, there still remain, not only the general limitations of human conception, but also the insufficiency of knowledge, the unequal balance of emotion and reason, which prevent us holding the balance of Truth at an absolute level. And in a rich and varied world, where are we to find the unbiassed mind, the unimpassioned soul, that is to be crowned as the dispenser of justice between the several truths? The point of view of the philosophical scientist is viewed with distrust by the poet, in that the former is apt to undervalue those qualities and gifts which are generally classified outside the area of mere reason—the qualities of intuition and emotion, and the gifts of inspiration and suggestion; the scientist in return regarding

with suspicion a view of life whose interpretation is not perhaps directly through the medium of these spiritual qualities and gifts, but which is in a marked sense influenced by them. Add to this the knowledge that in the evolution of social life no man can well stand alone, and that time has driven him, consciously or unconsciously, into corporate bodies, religious, political, and moral, which prevent him speaking the Truth apart from the teachings and influences of these corporations.

And although Mr. Buchanan is freer than most thinkers from the barnacles of convention and custom—untied by faithful adherence to organised systems—it is yet not very difficult for the critic who is sensitive to fine distinctions to indicate the partiality of the poet's view. Even in his early probational poems his spiritualised conception of life in the 'unsung cities' streets' is after all drawing us away from the true philosophical perspective of the lives he is dealing with, and his belief in the immortality of every living thing does not afford a very helpful solution to the problem of the higher improvement and evolution of nature. If Mr. Buchanan had viewed man as the criminologist and the practical philanthropist have to view him, he would have been suspicious of a point of view which concedes eternity to the born criminal and the habitual offender. The salvation of 'The Man Accurst,' however beautiful in its conception, is obtained at a risk to this higher evolution; and the partial view is

emphasised even more markedly by the fact that all this man's villainy, baseness, brutality, and hatred of the fair paths would not be likely to find their ablution under the emotional conditions which prompted the decree of his salvation. Nature at least gives no glimpse of such a disastrous experiment in altruistic rewards.

In his dramatic attack upon historic Christianity, the same partiality of view is evident. There is part of the truth, but not the whole truth, and that, as Goethe has put it, is often worse than a lie. The poet omits, what is a mere matter of justice, to pay a tribute to the beneficent altruism of the Christian Churches in the darkness of the middle ages, as far at least as it was used as a means of protecting women, and this even in view of the fact that this altruism was not untinged by a pernicious form of monkish egoism. Nor must it be forgotten that most of the philanthropic work in social life has been conducted under the inspiratory fervour of that Church which begs the name of the great Teacher of Nazareth.

Partial too is his view of war, of vivisection, and of the various factors concerned in human amelioration and social evolution. His just hatred of the horrors of war leads him to forget that history has taught that the most warlike nations are the most manly, and that more than a touch of the Philistinism of mere physical contest is necessary to save nations from the artistic sleepiness of over-civilisation. It must not be forgotten that the



salvation of the more highly evolved states must be secured by an occasional appeal to those virtues which only an active participation in war can arouse. Nor must we omit to remember that war is one of the means by which Nature secures her evolutionary end, not only by the destruction of much of the waste material of states, but also by securing a means of placing those who are incapable of voluntary social altruism under the strict surveillance of organised discipline. When opposed to vivisection, on the other hand, apart altogether from the consideration of the exaggerations which are associated with its detractors, it must not be forgotten by one who views human happiness, human progress, and human love as the chief bases of all philosophy, that its practice is founded on the very principles which have sent scientific thought and scientific investigation—with their concomitant results in the way of the enlightenment of human sorrow—so rapidly to the front as social forces.

Mr. Buchanan, a very strong man, is not alone in the tendency of his strength to ripen into despotism. Many of his ideas have tended in that direction; perhaps they appear to have done so in a more marked fashion in an age of feeble conviction and dilettante method. By this tendency to give full swing to great and eclectic ideas his view has been rendered more palpably partial. In most cases a sublime idealist, the poet is apt to become, to use Napoleon's favourite phrase, an ideologist. Seizing hold of the teachings

of science to support him in his criticisms of life, he hesitates in following the scientific method to its logical conclusion. This hesitation, however, diminished in his later studies, and there is evident a larger consistency of treatment, and accordingly a less partial point of view, than there was when he first essayed his high flights in philosophical speculation set to the tune of noble rhythm.

But it may seem the very height of crudeness of design to apply this method of criticism to the work of a writer of imaginative literature. To appreciate the poet, one must come into genuine emotional relationship with him, and it is cruel and idle to allow a stampede of rational cattle into the sequestered plot of ground where the poet keeps his delicate flowers. This is to borrow an analogy from Mr. Cadenhead. But Mr. Buchanan has not contented himself with the mere poetical or dramatical representation of his point of view; he has in nearly every case rushed into prose to augment the rationality of his contentions. In this fact is found the excuse of the critic.

To Mr. Buchanan life is a serious concern and poetry a serious mission, and until the volume of life is closed and placed remote from strife in Death's black library, everything is of importance that bears on the solution of life's mystery and Nature's cruelty. Literature to him is the merest waste of force, unless it tells us something new, or lends a new significance to what is old. 'Mankind wants poetry and not criticism; it wants earnest thought and life, and not a philosophy

of the schoolroom; it wants fearless truth and imagination applied to all the great phenomena of creation; it wants, in one word, a living creed, not a rehabilitation of creeds that are indeterminate.' 'Literature,' he says, 'cannot be divorced from life any more than poetry can be from religion. The two are one, and a man is great or wise, not because by humouring his reputation he succeeds in houcussing the world into an opinion of his greatness or wisdom, not because he is corroborated by the folly of his inferiors, but because he is saner than his fellows in the purest sanity of goodness and love. The greatest writers are those who possess the grandest and most all-embracing power of sympathetic vision. For great writing is great wisdom, and great wisdom means great goodness, that is, love for sympathy with all created things animate and inanimate.'

What is the special significance of Robert Buchanan as a poet? To understand what we mean by the word significance, let us glance at any of the great men who have drunk deep at the well of life, and have heralded some sort of dawn for the night of human darkness. What is the significance of Æschylus but his supreme power of foreseeing great eternal truths, and realising them in terms of the noblest passion in immortal drama. Of Victor Hugo the same may be said, with the difference that here the medium is the poetical novel. Where lies the significance of Goethe but in his supremacy as the analytical critic of human competition and human emotion—the first poet

of the new evolutionary movement, and primarily the apostle of egoism. Carlyle has his significance in his unique power of applying ethics to political speculation and action, and in his enormous capacity to rouse; Ruskin, in his capacity of giving his readers the sense of sight, of showing new wonders in the world that is ever before our eyes. Walt Whitman is 'supreme in his power of conveying moral stimulation'; and the significance of George Meredith is his almost isolated power of expressing personal passion, together with his marvellous insight into the spirit of comedy, that nimble god who watches over all. Herbert Spencer, the recording angel of the newer evolutionary spirit, derives his significance from his power of unveiling the mystery of human responsibility in the face of a society based not on ideas, but on pure economics; Huxley, by bringing to bear on historical and theological criticism the deductions of the biological and other sciences; and David Ferrier, by applying his own experimental researches to the amelioration of suffering humanity. The process might be extended to infinity. Rudyard Kipling has his significance in not only voicing the instincts of a new Imperial spirit, but also absorbing in a dramatic fashion the spirit of science in 'worshipping' the god of things as they are; and even (to quote Mr. Lang's majestic sonnet) when

From the songs of modern speech  
Men turn, and see the stars, and feel the free  
Shrill wind beyond the close of heavy flowers,  
And through the music of the languid hours,

*They hear like ocean on a western beach  
The surge and thunder of the Odyssey,*

they discern, on closer acquaintanceship, a significance even when under the sensuous influence of the 'surge and thunder,' its supreme significance lying in its truth to the state of the civilisation which it reflects, 'the description of its daily acts and the motives which make individuals act in the sense of their character and of their race.' Again, what is the significance of such men as Dante or Shakespeare? To quote Victor Hugo, 'Dante incarnated the supernatural, Shakespeare incarnated Nature.' But we must not forget, in indicating the significance of a seer or a teacher, that circumstances and influences are capable of modifying the possibility of permanency in the quality of the significance. Instance, for example, the fact that 'Milton lost much of his significance under the influence of modern thought, and that Virgil suffered from the influences of the Renaissance.'

From this host of great lights let us come to our poet, and attempt to indicate his significance. Passing out of our memory for the present the thought of his earlier poems, we call into view the series of epics and odes, carols and ballads, which extended from the publication of 'The Book of Orm' to that of 'The New Rome.' Throughout the whole of this work several ideas are reiterated. In the first place, that man is continually searching for a solution of life's meaning, and in that search calls to the God-Father for light.

To this cry there never comes an answer. The face of God is for ever hid behind the veil; the law of God, stern, inexorable, working on unchanged, is never broken—that law expressed in terms of science as the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. To ameliorate the suffering of mankind, human love springs supreme and eternal, together with a belief in a future life of reconciliation in the celestial ocean, in which some recompense shall be found for earthly inequalities. The essence of this human love is the Christ—the Jew, Jesus of Nazareth—and in his protest against the inexorable law of the Father, he, representing all the time the ambition of the human soul, is, in a sense ‘*ἄθεός*’—atheist—that is, apart from God. All this we have indicated as we proceeded. The sublimity of Jesus lies not in his claim of divine fatherhood, or in his unfulfilled dream of the world’s salvation, but in his recognition of the despair of humanity under the cruelty of a despotic egoism. In this sense, God the Father is the Grand Egoist; Jesus, and with him Humanity in general, the Sublime Altruist. Oppressing the fair face of Christ’s noble altruism is the cloud of the Churches, and in striking contrast to the loving freedom of soul which is the essence of the teaching of the Nazarene, is the attempt by the theologies to strangle the Christ in creeds. Having accepted the evolutionary spirit in most of its bearings, the poet is consistent enough to conclude that if the records of miracles and the so-called historical documents are not to

be trusted as scientific evidence, then it follows that some other explanation must be found to account for many of the details of Jesus' life. This position being adopted, there is nothing then of an abhorrent nature in the view the poet presents of the early life of Mary the Mother as it is found in the 'Ballad.' Only one conclusion could be drawn, and it adds to Mr. Buchanan's significance that he seized hold of this matter and treated it boldly. The poet or seer must always discern the truth sooner than other men, and granting the acceptance of the eclectic position as it is conveyed, for instance, by Mr. Huxley, and there can be no future for any literary movement careless of science, the time will come when the logical sequence will be a question of commonplace acceptance.

Mr. Buchanan's significance lies then in the fact that he has used, as a subject for poetry, the great truths Science has taught, and those his own speculative imagination seemed to discern behind the cloud of conventional belief. Disdainful of using the mighty medium of poetry as a simple reflector of things as they are in a conventional sense, he has used these great truths, or attempts at truth, as the bases of his poetical aspirations, and in so doing has accomplished what he longed to see attempted in his earlier outlook on life. It is another question whether in so doing he has been true to literature and to history. Truth to literature is a much more difficult question to solve than truth to history.

History is a record of facts; literary methods are evanescent. They are born, they evolve, die, are renascent, and so on. We are not talking of metre or the mere grammar of literature, but of the method, dramatic or otherwise, used by the seer. Taking a man who has used similar material, though in a totally different spirit and with a totally different object in view, it would be as absurd to compare Milton and Buchanan, as it would be to compare, say, Offenbach and Wagner. There is a kind of gospel of grammar, metre, and rhythm, but none of the method by which any particular form of truth shall be presented in literary shape. Truth to history is easier. Here we are dealing with a comparison of facts.

There is another form of truth less exact and less definite, varying in regard to the point of view. That is the truth of deduction—the inferences to be drawn from ascertained fact. If this aspect of the question is to be considered, the poet,—and there is nothing unnatural in this—clears away much of that nebulosity of doubt which the scientist is unable to do by the methods at his disposal. The poet is not content with the simple view of the concrete facts of nature; he is prepared to accept the longings of the soul as something as palpably true as those more material facts. Science, replying that it has a theory of the evolution of these longings which might relegate them to mere responses to sensuous emotions, depending for their basis on acquired knowledge and prejudices, gets no sympathy from the poet,



who sees in these yearnings the promise of the full light of the Celestial Ocean, and the joys of human reconciliation. Science, accepting the principle of the survival of the fittest as the only basis on which the higher evolution can be reached, and recognising that the struggle between natural forces, between the strong and weak, between health and disease, is the only means to secure the prolongation of natural vitality in its highest form, is passed by the poet, who demands from the All-Father the reason of this cruel principle. The same spirit makes him protest against all forms of investigation that necessitate injury to lower organisms, and against wars between creatures of the same instinct, the same possibilities, and the same aspirations.

In this we venture to indicate the criticism of science; the criticism of the theological position is evident, and need not be insisted upon.

To this must be added Mr. Buchanan's very significant study of the Devil, the parallels of which we have already considered. If the Devil is to be referred back to the original Daēvas of Zoroastrian Scriptures as the Spirit of Evil working conjointly with the Spirit of Good in the organisation and evolution of the nature of man, then Mr. Buchanan's Devil is both sophistical and paradoxical, and loses in being so, much of its significance. But if we are to study him as he was viewed by the Churches, and as in later days made responsible for an appearance as the serpent in the Mosaic story of the Garden of Eden,

then the poet's Devil, claiming to be the spirit of knowledge and the spirit of progress, is logical and consistent enough. In this case he comes to be the *Æon* of Science, the herald of light, he who, in face of the direct and indirect opposition of ecclesiasticism, fought for centuries at the head of the great army of secularists, an army which went to war for the sake of the great principle of eclecticism, that is,—absolute freedom of thought, and for the sake of emancipation from those superstitious fears which kept mankind from facing the truths of nature, and using them for its own purpose. Viewed from this point of view, there is a deep significance in the poet's conception of the *Æon*, who added to his schemes, not the defiance of the laws of nature, but the discovery of the means by which the apparent cruelty of these laws might be modified. In this sense he becomes the pioneer of scientific altruism.

This love of altruistic action, and this hatred of the cruel egoism of nature, which latter is, after all, reply the scientists, ultimately altruistic, are the essentials at the base of all the poet's work. 'God shall cast away no man' is the continued note of his most impassioned writing, whether found dramatically expressed in 'The Ballad of Judas Iscariot,' 'The Vision of the Man Accurst,' or in the tragedies of common life as they are conveyed in his 'London Poems'—the later of which, in their sublimity in surrounding tragic commonplaces with a spiritual halo, add a fresh significance to Mr. Buchanan as a poet.

As we have indicated, there are in many of the poet's more brilliant attempts evident signs not only of anachronisms, but of sophistries and paradoxes; yet the underlying principle of Revolt in the name of mankind against the Father of suffering and death, set to poetical expression, cannot fail to individualise the work of Mr. Buchanan. The failure of his significance cannot be prophesied, or if prophesied, relegated with any definiteness to futurity. Whatever he has failed to do, he has at least satisfied the standard set up for himself—he has given us fearless truth and imagination, applied to the great phenomena of creation; he has not rehabilitated creeds that are indeterminate. He has faced fearlessly the problems that must come to all of us, however cynical, sceptical, or dilettante we may be, concerning man's relation to man, and to the revelations of the Godhood in nature. However inadequate has been his expression, however partial his view, however sophistical his general expression, he has at least faced truth fearlessly and eclectically, and in so doing has laid claim to the highest intellectual morality. For let it not be forgotten by those who are startled by the poet's eclecticism, who even shudder at his view of what has been to them truth sacred in the holy of holies of their soul, that to men of speculation and of fearless outlook, the unforgivable sin is intellectual immorality. The eclectics can only lift up their faces fearlessly to mankind, they can only express their prayer to a God-Father by speaking the truth as

they find it ; and however wrong they may be, however far they may drift away from the white throne where Truth sits in her lonely splendour—espied occasionally, but never reached, by poet or thinker—yet in the very sincerity of their search they find their salvation and their justification. And it is necessary to remind mankind occasionally with regard to the question of susceptibility, that those of orthodox faith do not hold a monopoly either of conscience or of feeling. The constant reiteration of inconsequent and illogical dogmas is as distasteful to an eclectic searcher after truth, as are the fearless analyses of doctrine and dogma at the hand of the eclectic distasteful to the faithful adherent of the venerable creeds. The susceptibilities of the one deserve as much consideration as those of the other. In the words of Carlyle, 'He who builds by the wayside has many masters,' and members of a church militant need not be surprised if the enemy they are attacking use as effective, or even more effective, weapons than they use themselves. Reverence can be monopolised by no particular theology or particular school of thought. The eclectic thinker demonstrates his reverence not only by the use of the abilities which Nature has assigned to him, but also by the very fact that he is suspicious of systems which parochialise the worship of the supreme λόγος by cramping it in creeds. The universal recognition of that simple fact will go far to bind humanity by the bond of a common love. As for our poet, although ecclesiastics may say that he has acceded too much

to the autocracy of reason, and even though scientists may be suspicious inasmuch as he has demanded an equal right for the spiritual emotions, yet the poet will reply that spiritualism and naturalism—using them here conventionally as distinctive terms—are necessary elements of every work of art, and the predominancy of one over the other has no certain or unchangeable ratio. Finally, let it be remembered to Mr. Buchanan's honour that he has never attempted to humour his reputation, and has never been led to follow the false gods of those who ensured him a certain place in contemporary estimation if he would but promise to sing a poem occasionally to the gods of the moment, however much he suspected their divinity. His methods of dealing with these deities were not always pleasant or delicate; but having at a very early stage of his career been driven into the wilderness, he could not, as an Ishmael, use the methods of a pampered Isaac. It will probably be found that the poet will not come to his own till the remembrance of these, what may appear to some as, literary blasphemings is forgotten, and certainly not till contemporary thought comes up to the point reached by the seer.

Nor must we omit the significance of Mr. Buchanan apart from his more prophetic and speculative utterances. The author of 'The Ballad of Judas Iscariot,' of 'White Rose and Red,' and of 'Poet Andrew,' must always be regarded with serious attention by students of poetry, even if neglected by many of the

petulantly ignorant collectors of anthologies and their numerous friends. The foremost Scoto-Celtic poet of our time, as he is called by Mrs. Sharp in the 'Lyra Celtica,' can allow his phantasies and realities in verse to be independent of the indifference of cliques, as long as they touch the larger heart and the more far-seeing criticism. 'His deep insight into Nature, and his fine interpretation of the mystical sentiment bred of man's contact with her, his delicate fancy, his semi-Celtic phantasy,' to quote Dr. Japp, 'which in his treatment of certain themes impart such glow and glamour of colour, and weird witchery of impression, as no other poet of the time has approached, not to speak of his realistic, dramatic perception, as seen in such ballads as "Liz" and "Nell" and "Meg Blane," combine to place him apart amid the select few, the best of whose work is to "live." He touches the most commonplace things with the light that never was on sea or shore, and yet nothing of truth is sacrificed. This is the true test of poetry. Then in his "Book of Orm" he translates us to a world of dream, yet a world in which the grand realities of life stand out bold, like vast mountains whose lofty heads are lost in mist, yet faintly outlined. You are moved to a sense of some vast, vague, shadowy presence, which, felt or unfelt, is weird, fateful, and inevitable, hovering over all life, and touching it with awe and wonder. The manner in which Mr. Buchanan traces out and justifies, in a poetic sense, the bliss of gradual dissolution is at once

elevated and powerful. The picture of the void left on the sense and the imagination by the sudden disappearance of all trace, even of the poor body, as the dewdrop melts in the sun, the horror, as of some awful fate for ever hovering above and around, is suffused with the sense of mystery and awe, and the recovery, as if from some nightmare, is equally fine. In Mr. Buchanan's genius,' says Dr. Japp, 'is wedded the grace and witchery of delicate phantasy with the directest and boldest realism. Nature and man stand between the two, as it were, and the force of his sympathies unites them, and brings them into accord. . . . He is alive to every thrill of the intellectual, social, and moral atmosphere, and translates, as his genius dictates, the impression into art. . . . He is in touch with all that makes men feel, that makes men suffer, and that makes men lonely, dissatisfied, and despair and doubt.'

Let Mr. Buchanan be tested on well-defined lines, and what is the result? If the question of pure human Drama is concerned, excluding altogether 'The Drama of Kings,' of which the poet himself is suspicious, let us take such poems as 'Fra Giacomo' and 'Hakon of Thule.' In each of these we have a single idea, presented in a perfect dramatic fashion, fearlessly true to the central 'motif,' without any critical intrusion to mar the simple directness of the idea. In 'ballad metre,' let the severest and most academically critical spirit be applied to 'The Battle of Drumliemoor' and 'The Ballad of Judas Iscariot,' and let the

result be realised. When simplicity of character and equal simplicity of surroundings are to be spiritualised in poetic expression, what is more perfect than 'Willie Baird'? Among genre and pastoral pictures, 'The Churchyard' and 'Down the River' must always occupy a notable position; and although Mr. Buchanan has written few lyrics, his lyric-descriptive poems, of the type of 'Spring Song in the City,' contain some of his finest work, and are in every sense worthy of more than mere contemporary estimation.

It has been suggested more than once, that all Mr. Buchanan's 'aberrations' have sprung from a want of the sense of humour. It is this sense, certainly, which gives us, more than any other, the sane, the healthy estimate of life; but a civilisation which charges a man with the want of a virtue should be certain, first, of its own righteousness. 'My critics,' says the poet, 'presume, I suppose, that I ought to perceive the joke of the Nonconformist conscience and latter-day Christianity.' Let us prove to our own mental and spiritual satisfaction that modern civilisation and the concurrent pursuit of an idealised religion are compatible, and then we may be free to talk of the want of sense of humour in others. If we face facts as they are, and acquiesce in the charges that the essential elements in modern, political, and social life are incompatible in their practice with the Faith of which our Royal master is the defender, we may then be justified, by our intellectual honesty at any rate, in viewing the want



of humour in one who is mortal like the rest of us, yet perceives the hollowness of making an eternal compact between the rush for power and the worship of show, and the doctrines of abnegation and humility as preached on the Mount of Olives. We recall, in this instance, what the present Laureate wrote to Mr. William Watson at the time when the latter was calling upon his countrymen to risk international complications by plunging into a piece of vague, benevolent altruism in favour of a suppressed people. Mr. Austin reminded Mr. Watson that if he 'were but with him in his pretty country-house, were but comfortably seated by the Yule-logs' blaze, and joining with him in seasonable conviviality, the enigmas of Providence and the whole mysteries of things would become transparent to him.' That is what we are virtually saying to our poet—'God is in His heaven, all's right with the world.' There is still laughter, and love, and song, and although we have not yet discovered the universal tabloid for natural egoism and 'original sin,' at any rate out of this mixture of personal egoism and social altruism, the love of war and the gospel of peace, worship of strength and love of weakness, essential Materialism and professed Christianity, social purity and organised vice, legalised monogamy and polygamy in camera, we have made an excellent social broth that will warm the national conscience, and make us forget the submerged dissatisfaction in the general sense of good-fellowship that this mess of pottage inspires!

The present writer firmly believes that the point of view of the poet is often neither absolutely true to history, nor, in a few cases, to his own personal experience, but at the same time, he doubts whether the test of humour can be applied in the case of the poet's more serious efforts, for the very reasons he has been attempting to indicate. If there is a want of the sense of humour, it springs from a belief that there is a likelihood of any radical changes taking place in human paradoxes. The poet himself owns that the law of God is never broken, and therefore he is unlikely to get much help from Nature, and if he but recall that there is little evidence to show that the altruistic spirit is evolving, he may rest satisfied that the advance to human salvation will continue to be a slow one, and checked by many retrograde steps. Despite Mr. Herbert Spencer, man is born an egoist as of yore. The change, if there be one, lies not in the evolution of an altruistic spirit, but in the accumulation of altruistic ideas, which become the capital of Society. Man does not come into his legacy in the mere process of being born; he inherits it as a member of a social state. 'That man is susceptible of a vast amount of improvement by education, by instruction, and by the application of his intelligence to the adaptation of the conditions of life to his higher needs, I entertain not the slightest doubt. But so long as he remains liable to error, intellectual or moral, so long as he is compelled to be perpetually on guard against the cosmic forces, so long as he is haunted

by inexpugnable memories and hopeless aspirations, so long as the recognition of his intellectual limitations forces him to acknowledge his incapacity to penetrate the mystery of existence, the prospect of attaining untroubled happiness, or a state which can, even remotely, deserve the title of perfection, appears to me to be as misleading an illusion as ever was dangled before the eyes of poor Humanity.'<sup>1</sup>

For the paradoxes and inconsistencies of social life, what is wanted is not rhetoric but ridicule, not passion but satire. And although the poet in much of his work seems to lose sight of this fact, he discerned at one time its essential truth: 'It has been repeatedly forced upon me of late, that of all things wanted by the present generation, a satirist is wanted most; one who would tell the world its sins and foibles, not with the sneaking snigger or familiar wink of a society journalist, but with a voice loud and clear enough to reverberate from Land's End to John o' Groat's. It would matter little where the voice was first heard. It might be in the pulpit, it might be on the stage. It might sound as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, or it might be heard, as more than once heretofore, from the very heart of the crowd. Since Dickens dropped the scourge, satire has been sadly at a discount, and we are in reality worse off for "censores morum" than were our prototypes, the prosperous "bourgeoisie" of the Second Empire. . . . Meanwhile Society,

<sup>1</sup> Huxley.

Mænad-like, twines flowers in her hair, and goes from bad to worse. The only individuals who tell her of her vices are those who flourish through them, and the cue of these is to lament over the ideals they first overthrew, and to pretend that goodness is useless, since there is no power but evil left. Well, even a comedy of the Empire would be better than this. . . . The only straightforward and truth-telling force at present at work is modern Science, but it is not sufficiently aggressive in the social sphere to be of much avail. So the feast goes on, so the soothsayer is put aside, and the voice of the prophet is unheard. Some fine day, nevertheless, there will be a revelation—the handwriting will be seen on the wall in the colossal cipher of some supreme Satirist. How much of our present effulgent civilisation will last till then? How much will not perish without any aid from without, by virtue of its own inherent folly and dry-rot? Meantime, even a temporary revelation would be thankfully accepted. Such satire as Churchill suddenly lavished upon the stage would be of service to Society just now. Even satire as wicked as that with which Byron deluged the “piggish domestic virtues” of the Georges would not be altogether amiss. Only, it must come in simple speech, not in such mystic dress as that worn by St. Thomas of Chelsea when he gave forth his memorable sartorial prophecies.’ That embodies the spirit of wisdom. When angry rhetoric is but a douche of hot, and indifference a douche of cold water, and reason a

slow lethal process, ridicule and satire are deadly poisons. A fuller recognition of this fact might have led Mr. Buchanan nearer to that 'sense of humour' without which life, whether we view it on its social, moral, or intellectual sides, becomes a very anarchic concern. But the sense of humour is a two-edged sword, and many people are apt to take it by the blade, and not by the handle. If it brings us nearer to sanity, it also may tend to paralyse our holiest convictions. In fact, in an age when human ambitions and human aims drift easily into social and conventional moulds, when materialism and the principles of social compromise are the fashionable gods, there is a tendency to blur the face of aspiration, to reduce the purple of hope and ambition to a dull grey of indifferent acquiescence. And those who preach control and sanity most fervently see most clearly the dangers which lie before us if this control and sanity are allowed to be systematised into a gospel. After all, control as a virtue is only of a negative sort; and sanity does not mean mediocrity and tameness, it simply means wisdom. When we pursue the normal level of living, let us not despise the man on the look-out; while we hew stones and draw water, let us not sneer at him who interrogates the stars. And is it wise, in the ease of our own calm sanity, to cherish a hatred of that hot blood and indomitable persistence which inspire the dreamer, the poet, and, in a more vicious sense, the fanatic?

It is this blood that has inspired forlorn hopes, this spirit which may drive a man to be crucified for his belief. It would be a black day for the world when emotion had fuller sway than reason, when sensibility became a higher virtue than sense, and passion a nobler pursuit than sanity; but it would be a blacker when the worship of the evident in life and the pursuit of the commonplace were raised to such a pitch that the dreamer or the impassioned poet, voyaging on seas for which Science has no chart, nor Experience any compass, were counted as men free from their wits, or, to come back to the phrase we beg, 'wanting in the sense of humour.' Mr. George Meredith—always rapid as the dart to pierce the heart of things—holds that it is the first condition of sanity to believe that our civilisation is founded on common sense, and taking his fellow-men to be as wise as himself, he stepped no further into the elaboration of his terms. But might it not be judicious to suggest that it is wise always to understand that the essence of the word, that is 'sense,' is to have a more emphatic emphasis than the prefix 'common,' and that in the aggregate, common sense is not necessarily the philosophy of mediocrity. And it is wise also to remember that there is more in the scheme of life than mere foundations. And even when we are allowed to turn our minds to the gods, we must not be accused of worshipping alone that Spirit of Comedy which the genius of Mr. Meredith has idealised in godhead—that spirit with its brows

flung up like a fortress lifted by gunpowder, which looks humanely malign, and roars with laughter whenever men wax out of proportion, are self-deceived and hoodwinked, and are given to run riot in idolatries, and drift into vanities. The older gods command our worship, and although we may not discern them in the market-place, let us not limit the world by the boundaries of the bazaar, but let us recognise a world in which poets may dream and voyage forth to catch the message which they tell us the gods hold for mortals; a message which it will do us no harm to hear, if not to embody in our philosophy. Keats, in a memorable sonnet dedicated to Homer, reminds the poet :

For Jove uncurtained Heaven to let thee live,  
And Neptune made for thee a spermy tent,  
And Pan made sing for thee his forest-hive.

And though Wordsworth, keenly alive to the sanity which the pursuit of things as they are only can bring, reminds us that 'to the solid ground of Nature trusts the mind that builds for aye'; yet he, like all seers, was conscious of the deadening power which a life in the fair paths of common truths tends to have upon the human soul :

The world is too much with us ; late and soon  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers :  
Little we see in Nature that is ours ;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon,  
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon,  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers.  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune ;  
It moves us not—Great God ! I'd rather be  
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn ;

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So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn,  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

The true humour, in fact, is reached by a knowledge of good and evil evidenced from fact and comparison with a beatitude derived from an inspiratory fervour which comes to us at those times when, 'from the songs of modern speech, men turn and see the stars.'

Finally, to the poet, belief and living are twin conceptions, and his faith is

Not far away  
In the void Heaven up yonder, not on creeds  
Upbuilded 'mid the ever-shifting sands,  
Not in the Temple of God's sycophants,  
But here, among our fellows, down as deep  
As the last rung of Hell.

Hatred of mankind and love of God cannot exist together :

Hate Man, and lo ! thou hatest, lovest God ;  
Keep faith in Man, and rest with God indeed.

He who has gone with us with any care, to view the poet's outlook, will have a clear enough vision of his philosophy. It is in the long-run a glorious optimism, inasmuch as it implies belief in the eternity of living, in the holiness of human love. His distaste for creeds springs from a simple belief that the last word of the soul can never be written, and that an ever-winged bird, soaring higher and higher in the eye of God, cannot be brought to earth to sing in the dreary cage wherein every note is formulated and catalogued.



He believes in Love, but not as it is painted by the creeds. He finds no love in the great struggle for life—therefore he sees none in the will of the God-Father. He can praise and he can pray, but he cannot love. God sends nothing but agony, a struggle, and death.

Walk abroad ; and mark  
The cony struggling in the fowmart's fangs,  
The deer and hare that fly the sharp-tooth'd hound,  
The raven that with flap of murderous wing  
Hangs on the woolly forehead of the sheep  
And blinds its harmless eyes ; nor these alone,  
But every flying, every creeping thing,  
Anguishes in the fierce blind fight for life !  
Sharp hunger gnaws the lion's entrails, tears  
The carrion-seeking vulture, films with cold  
The orbs of snake and dove. For these, for all,  
Remains but one dark Friend and Comforter,  
The husher of the weary waves of Will,  
Whom men name Peace or Death.

But he believes in human Love, and cries out his belief in the ears of priests and ascetics. 'Is there any honest man that doubts that Love, even so-called "fleshy Love," is the noblest pleasure that man is permitted to enjoy ; or that sympathy of woman for man, and of man for woman, is in its essence the sweetest sympathy of which the soul is capable. Only one thing is higher and better than Love's happiness, and that one thing is Love's sorrow, when there comes out of loss and suffering the sense of compensation, of divine gain.'

After all, the wisest of men have occasionally to wipe away the dew that dims the glass of their philosophy. All efforts are comparative, all

Truth is comparative. Good and bad are not yet writ on the scrolls of the absolute, and to the present writer Mr. Buchanan's merit lies not so much in that he has dreamed often, and has fluttered his poetical wings often, but in that he has dared to bring the charm of poetical expression to bear on themes which were originally considered the sole property of philosophers and speculators. While Tennyson is the mirror of the present age, Carlyle its censor, and Macaulay its panegyrist; while Herbert Spencer is its recording angel, and George Meredith the true discernor of its comic spirit, Robert Buchanan is the herald of its revolt, the mouthpiece of a sphinx-like woe, which, as a seer, he knows is buried deep down in the heart and soul of contemporary thought, and he realises that at the last.

God and the gods shall abide, wherever our souls seek a token,  
 Speech of the Gods shall be heard, the silence of Death shall be  
 broken,  
 And Man shall distinguish a sign, a voice in the midnight, a  
 tremor  
 From every pulse of the Heavens, to answer the heart of the  
 Dreamer!  
 Faces of gods and men shall throng the blue casements above  
 him!  
 Heaven shall be peopled with throngs of Spirits that watch him  
 and love him!

Mr. Linley Sambourne in a moment of inspiration<sup>1</sup> has depicted the idealised figure of the New Century springing from the wing of Time, and buoyant and unconscious of the 'shades of the prison-house,' straining forward with inquiring,

<sup>1</sup> 'Punch's Almanac,' 1901.

fearless, inspired gaze into the meshes of the veil that hides the future. In her hand the staff of Faith and the lamp of Science. No longer do we espy an allegory of twin souls, Reason and Faith; Reason with his eyes fixed to the 'solid ground of nature,' groping, in the shadows, his uneven way with difficulty to Truth; and Faith with eyes to heaven, sailing in the full light of inspiration, unchecked to the Sungates. Faith and Reason now unite in the spirit of Imaginative Science, in the ideal of the aspiring Searcher after Wisdom. In the Ideal figure we see personified Imagination guided by Reason, Prophecy lighted by Science. This is what the Nineteenth bequeaths to the Twentieth Century. Hereafter, Superstition must creep warily and be an outcast from the newer Heaven, and Sacerdotalism assume a lower grade in the temple of human aspiration. For the construction of this Ideal, which is to lead mankind to the brink of the Celestial Ocean, Robert Buchanan has ever been an impassioned advocate, appealing not with the mere egoism of rhetoric, but with a yearning desire to bring human hopes and aspiration to a higher level than what to him appears to be the parochialised methods of the Churches, and the paralysing doctrines of mere materialism.

In the gradual reconstruction of human hopes and human ideals, parochial truths will fade, yet flicker on for a while, whilst Eternal Truth will flash up anew to guide nations in the process of time to the basis of a common ideal and a common

religion. The methods that shall assist in the embodiment of this ideal and this religion will differ widely, and may continue to be the ground of strife and dissension, yet in the evolutionary process the teaching of Jesus will gain new life and a new significance, whilst Christian theology will lose its supremacy and its vitality. The tendency will be to combine the essential truths of all great ethical systems, and in the attainment of that combination the process of the survival of the fittest will continue to have its legal sway. Not for the first time shall Jewish, Greek, Roman, and Hindu thought meet on the banks of the Jordan. With a tenderer reconciliation in view shall the priests of the newer gods rouse from their slumber their older brethren. No longer shall Christ walk in the wilderness, where despair, melancholy, and gloom dwell, but in the purified groves of Pan; and at the gateway of the new heaven Apollo, Prometheus, Balder, Bhudda shall sing with the Nazarene a new song of Hope. That song may sound clearer in the East than in the West, in that Far East, perhaps, where a young nation is springing eagerly forward to grasp and use what is best in the garden and storehouse of the world. Yet clear against the sky of human endeavour shall be written that sign which Mr. Buchanan discerned so clearly in his later days: 'The Law of God is never broken.' With that Truth impressing itself upon human reason and human imagination, no man, however inspired, will attempt to break or suspend that Law.

With the dead century the pen of the poet is laid aside. Ending as he began, he takes his final steps towards the brink of the Valley of the Dark Shadow, with few of his contemporaries to give him the grand hailing sign of sympathy. But the militant poet has had the last bay leaf snatched from his brow, and hereafter must begin to take an assured place amongst the poets that he loved of English race. The present writer, standing as he does by training, by instinct, and in the general conduct of life, at nearly opposite poles to Mr. Buchanan, lays this introduction to his poetry with affection at the side of his bed of sickness, with the hope that it may serve to reveal to many a new aspect of a man who is known to them only as a novelist, playwright, and publicist, believing that a sympathetic study of the poet will light at least one new fire in the temple of human aspiration, and add one more interpreter for the mystic language of the human heart.

For lo ! I voice to you a mystic thing  
Whose darkness is as full of starry gleams  
As is a tropic light ; in your dreams  
This thing shall haunt you and become a sound  
Of friendship in still places, and around  
Your lives this thing shall deepen and impart  
A music to the trouble of the heart,  
So that perchance, upon some gracious day,  
You may bethink you of the song and pray  
That God may bless the singer for your sake !

Solemn before the poet, as before all of us, is veiled the dark portal, and until that is passed, we know not if all the glory and the dream of the poet be merely the rainbows of his sorrow, or 'whether

**in some more mystic condition the Gods sweep past in thunder,' and if the Immortals are remembering all the melodies and the ideals that we on earth have forgot, and are plucking again the living bloom from the rose-trees of life's Maytime. Though that riddle of the gods cannot be answered by Seer or by Dreamer—**

**Yet shall the River of Life wander and wander and wander,  
Yet shall the Trumpet of Time sound from the Sungates up yonder,  
Yet shall the fabled Sphinx brood on the mystic To-morrow,  
While newer Cities arise, on the dust that is scatter'd in sorrow !**

**' Non Crux sed Lux.'**

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## A Study in Social Compromise, Expediency and Adaptability

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